

# TEACHER Talk

*PREA Online Edition*

A NEWSLETTER WRITTEN BY THE PARK RIDGE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

## Roadmap for Success

Teachers at Roosevelt Elementary are not afraid to ask the tough questions when it comes to teaching and learning. One question often asked among teachers:

“How can we bring continuity to so many district initiatives?”

This question was recently addressed by teachers on Roosevelt’s Quality

Improvement Team. Each school has a Quality Improvement Team, or QIT. The purpose of the QIT, among many things, is to implement the school improvement plan, or SIP. The teachers and staff who comprise Roosevelt’s QIT have devised

and published a guide which they call, “The Roosevelt Road Map.” The purpose of the map is to provide all staff with a visual layout that shows how all school committees are

connected. “Just like we teach for our students, sometimes it’s easier to see how things are connected when we can see them visually,” said Barclay

Marcell, Roosevelt academic achievement teacher. Barclay is one of eleven teachers who comprise the QIT. “Coming up with the idea for a visual road map was truly a collaborative effort by the QIT. When we as



### Inside:

Teachers in District 64 endeavor to implement initiatives to educate the “whole child.” See how children are benefiting...



teachers can see the bigger picture, it enables us to deliver an even better quality of education to our students.” commented Barclay. To view the road map for yourself, be sure to visit the Roosevelt School Office.

### About PREA...

The Park Ridge Education Association (PREA) is the exclusive professional organization for the teachers of Community Consolidated School District 64. Working in conjunction with the Board of Education and community, the members of the PREA are committed to providing the highest quality of education to the school children of Park Ridge-Niles.

## Field puts “peace” of mind into playgrounds



Looking around the Field School playground, an observer can see a variety of activities going on--four square, scoop games, scattered circles, running bases and hopscotch. Disagreements are settled, not with loud arguments, but with constructive talk and sometimes “rock, paper, scissors.” This is Peaceful Playground at work.

Last summer in sweltering heat, teachers, students, and parents collaborated to create the colorfully painted Field School Peaceful Playground. The purpose of Peaceful Playground is to provide activity for all students, ownership in civil behavior, and provide a safe recess time for every Field School student. This project was graciously funded by the Field School PTO.

The Peaceful Playground program encompasses all school personnel. Teachers, students, and lunch supervisors were all trained in the five components of Peaceful Playground: consistent set of rules, solutions to conflicts, game markings, appropriate use and care of equipment, and consistent expectations. Parents were also invited to a Peaceful Playground Open House to experience first hand the success of the program.

The Peaceful Playground concept was initially presented to the PTO and staff by Maureen Borowski, physical education teacher, to support the Civil Behavior school improvement goal. The Specials Learning Team will follow up by collecting data to support the success of the Peaceful Playground program. Data collection will include surveys, documentation of playground infractions using behavior warnings, and monitoring playground injuries.

“I have not had to settle one playground conflict this year. I attribute this to our Peaceful Playground. Students are learning to take ownership of problem solving. They love this program. They have even written about it during an all school writing activity,” said Anne Ham, fifth grade teacher. “When Mrs. Creely, our principal, presented the writing samples at a PTO meeting, many parents noticed the vast number of positive comments regarding the Peaceful Playground. That says a lot about the success of the program.”

Visitors are always welcome to visit the Peaceful Playground and see for themselves the impact of the program on the Field School family.

## Franklin teachers get behind ‘Civil Behavior’ initiatives

Ask the students at Franklin School to tell you how District 64’s Civil Behavior Program works in their classrooms. You’re likely to hear a variety of enthusiastic responses that cross the curriculum and actively engage the students in developing character and social and emotional skills. Classroom meetings offer students a structured path to exchange ideas respectfully and practice strategies to resolve conflicts. Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Franklin students are guided by these self-questions and encouraged to think before they speak.

Communication workshops in the classrooms demonstrate proper and effective verbal interaction. Literature and role playing get to the heart of the matter providing lessons on behavior, respect, and social and emotional growth. Benjamin Franklin once wrote, “Little strokes fell great oaks.” In response to the recent hurricane relief efforts, Franklin students participated in a coin collection drive involving them in a national outreach opportunity as young citizens who can make a difference. On November 11, local Veterans of Foreign Wars were guest speakers at each grade level. Questions and answers gave students a glimpse of global awareness and patriotic duty.

**please see CIVIL BEHAVIOR, p. 3**





## Lincoln teachers subject of 'investigation'?



### CIVIL BEHAVIOR: (continued from page 2)

Civil Behavior goals are also included during recess periods at Franklin. Students, teachers, and recess supervisors teamed up to learn the skills and benefits of Project Playground. This program encourages friendly play and offers effective solutions to minor disagreements using fair and simple rules that ensure safe and healthy recreation. Student response to and involvement in Civil Behavior activities and strategies at Franklin School continue to be enthusiastic.

### *Students use forensics and scientific method to help crack case*

The sixth grade science students at Lincoln Middle School are once again ready to take on their forensic roles to help solve a crime. The esteemed, yet fictional, genetics researcher, Dr. J. B. Robinson has met his untimely end, and it is up to the Scene Evaluators, Lab Team, and Detectives to uncover the truth about his murder.

Detectives will begin with basic questioning, while scene evaluators recover evidence to pass on to the lab team. The lab team will then use analysis of blood type, fibers, and fingerprints and deliver its findings back to the detectives for further questioning. Meanwhile, the media will be using digital video and iMovie to create a newscast as the case unfolds. Finally, the jury will be speaking with a judge about the jury process and studying aspects of criminal law.

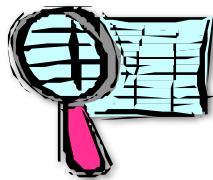
Students are placed in one of these five investigative groups according to their preference and they will learn differentiated curriculum about different aspects of forensic science. At the conclusion of their investigation, each group will present their findings in front of the Honorable Jim Blouch (principal at Lincoln Middle School and annual forensic judge). Only with precise lab work, critical problem-solving, and effective

collaboration, will the sixth graders be able to determine the guilty party.

This experience would not be possible without the gracious volunteerism of the Lincoln staff, as teachers assume the roles of various suspects; in this case, a over-indulged wife, a disgruntled co-worker, a troubled protestor and a desperate ex-wife of a current client. These adults provide real suspects to participate in the detective interviews. Students discover that, while suspects may spin deceitful tales, the evidence doesn't lie.

Sixth grade teachers Kate May, Cris Mytko and Colleen VanHoesen developed the project as a culmination of their students' studies of scientific skills. The lesson is a real-world example of the scientific method in action.

When asked how students have benefited from the *Forensics* lessons, sixth grade teacher Cris Mytko responded, "There truly is something for every student. The benefits of allowing student choice, focusing 6th grade enthusiasm, and involving staff from around the school make this a unique and memorable experience for all of the students. This unit is problem-solving and collaboration all rolled up in a real-life and high-interest application of science skills."



### *Some PREA facts...*

The Park Ridge Education Association is the teacher's union in District 64. The PREA has 359 highly qualified educators working with the children of Park Ridge-Niles. The PREA contract requires continuous education for all teachers. There are 261 teachers (73%) with Master's Degrees or beyond. There are 287 teachers (80%) with more than five years teaching experience. Teachers in District 64 have an average of twelve years teaching experience.



Emerson 7th graders created images with graphic artwork that became the key in reflecting on their own experiences with empathy.

## Artwork and empathy combine at Emerson Middle School

At Emerson Middle School, Sonja Dziedzic’s first trimester 7th grade art classes had an opportunity to do some interdisciplinary art work on the topics of graphic design and empathy. The unit led students through activities which included online research, critical thinking, problem solving and use of many tools including the computer, light tables and dry mount presses resulting in posters that expressed an idea related on the topic of tolerance vs. hate.

Students began with research on the web site [www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org). “I told them that they were reading to develop their opinions...which would be turned into ideas... which they would communicate in their posters. They were to pay attention to their gut reactions to what they were reading about instances of hate crimes, bigotry, discrimination and other



examples of human intolerance for differences. When the hair on the back of their necks started to stand up or they started to feel queasy or moved to tears, they were on their way,” said Mrs. Dziedzic.

Through a series of questions, prompts and checklists, students generated text and found visual images to appropriate into their work. Good composition and the ability to arrange text and images to create an impact were the goal. Judging from the feedback from the students themselves after finishing the work, and reflecting on the process as well as the positive feedback from staff and students throughout the building as they viewed the works on display, the project was certainly a success. The posters raised awareness building-wide of the need to promote tolerance in our daily lives.

## District 64 teachers have an ‘ELF’ by their sides



What do District 64 teachers have in common with Santa Claus? They each have an ELF working by their side. However, in the case of the teachers, the ELF is actually the Elementary Learning Foundation.

For several years, the Foundation has been an integral part of aiding educational efforts in District 64 by awarding funds to support grants written annually by teachers.

The mission of ELF is to expand and enrich lifelong learning opportunities for all students in the Park Ridge-Niles Community Consolidated School District 64. This is accomplished by acquiring and devel-

oping resources to fund grants within the school district. These programs are funded above and beyond the district’s regular operating budget.

ELF awarded a total of \$33,886 to fund grants written by educators for the 2005-06 school year.

Among staff whose grants were

awarded by ELF were, Roosevelt teachers Cathy Reardon, Kathy Ross, Nicole Benoit, Barclay Marcell and Kristin Park; Jefferson speech-pathologists Barb Murphy and Joanna Fernandez; Washington teachers Krista Weil and Sara Douglass; Lincoln teachers Jill Benson, Denise Reeder, Tim Moore and Jim Romey; Carpenter teachers Fred Klonsky, Kara Forrest and Debbie Graziano; Emerson teacher Cathy Murges.

“The teachers’ level of enthusiasm toward ELF and the effort put forth by teachers in each grant was truly impressive,” said ELF Chair, Pat Fioretto.

Teachers throughout District 64 are grateful for this ongoing partnership. To learn more about ELF visit their website: [www.district64elf.org](http://www.district64elf.org).



Roosevelt staff member Cathy Reardon worked with her school principal to write an ELF grant that supported bullying prevention for kids.



## Emerson MS... Looking out for others

Emerson Middle School has a passion for helping those in need. Our students have involved themselves in a variety of fundraisers and activities that have benefited literally hundreds so far this school year. They will continue to do so, as their spirit of caring and giving is year-round.

Several teams, including the Wise Owls and the Gators, jumped into action to help support the American Red Cross's efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The 6th grade Wise Owls contributed almost \$1,900 and the 7th grade Gators nearly \$900. The 7th grade Gator team raised their donation by holding an aluminum can recycling drive which also benefited our environment.

The Annual Student Government Association Thanksgiving Food Drive brought in about 2,200 items for the Maine Township Emergency Food Pantry to help feed the local in need.

Approximately sixty students volunteered to participate in the St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital Math-a-thon bringing in over \$4000 to support this worthy cause.

The caring and giving spirit of the holiday season was clearly demonstrated by the Emerson faculty and students, who as individuals or with teams, were "Santa" for 101 children and 10 families in 2005. In addition, the 6th grade Wise Owls purchased materials with money raised through bake sales to make polar fleece hats and scarves for women and children in the local WINGS Program. The Gator team silent auction was held in December to benefit Have Dreams, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and the American Cancer Society.

The goodness from the hearts and hands of Emerson staff, students and their families will continue in 2006 as the Gophers and Jaguars are planning to make at least one wish come true for a terminally ill child through yearlong fundraising projects. Fulfilling just one wish through the Make-A-Wish Foundation will cost on average \$5000, but it will fill the hearts of many here at Emerson.

We celebrate and thank those who have given of their time, talent and financial resources. The world is a better place because of Emerson Middle School!

## 'World's Largest Reading Event' comes to Field

This past December, third graders at Field participated in Scholastic's 7th annual, *World's Largest Reading Event*. Mrs. Borta, Mrs. Erlandson, Mrs. Mollenkamp and Mrs. Moon coordinated the effort. Students joined in the global community of readers - kids, teachers, parents and friends - as classrooms all around the world took time on December 2nd to read for '2006' seconds (approximately 33 and a half minutes).

Students brought pillows, blankets and stuffed animals to school to use for the time period. Students had the chance to look at a world map showing every country that participated, and listed all schools participating world-wide! All 50 states, as well as

all of North America participated, along with countries from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America. The students were amazed with the number of children participating, and that large and small countries were involved. They were thrilled to see their classroom listed on the website! The comments most heard when done... "Can't we keep going?"

"This is just one of the many things we do to keep children excited about reading," said Mrs. Moon. The children saw that they had a connection with students in countries of different ethnicities, religions and situations (war-stricken countries; less developed countries).

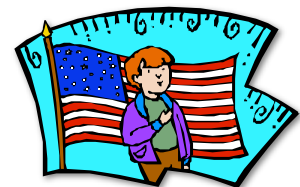
## Lincoln's 'S.O.S'

In response to staff generated suggestions for school improvement goals, Lincoln Middle School's QIT organized the first SOS (Service Over Self) experience last year. In May, at our SOS celebration assembly, we heard from each of the thirty-two groups that participated. The Maine Township Food Pantry, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and the Ronald McDonald House are just a few of the groups that benefited from funds raised by our students.

However, much of our service surpassed mere financial support. Students planted plants, recruited blood donors, crocheted baptismal blankets, and recycled school supplies to benefit disadvantaged schools. A lot of good came out of the 2004-2005 SOS experiences.

The QIT took staff feedback into consideration to further refine the experience for our students. Lincoln QIT members Carol Rickert, Megan Fastabend, Tammi Nardi, Jennifer Janetzke, Tom Nasshan, Cris Mytko and Carly Sebo helped to re-energize the SOS concept.

This year, all ideas were student generated; with the SOS plans being finalized only as each group of students has an opportunity to meet together with their staff facilitator. Each of our 720+ students will be placed in one of their top three choices of SOS groups. More choices create smaller group sizes, which will allow staff facilitators to have more individualized interaction with the group members. The SOS experience at Lincoln Middle School is a work in progress, but aims to be a meaningful and authentic opportunity for our students to help others, while learning something in return.



## Teacher awards, events & happenings from around D64

Awards Galore!....**Jane Tufts**, Speech Pathologist, Franklin School has received the American Speech/Language/Hearing Association's A.C.E. Award recognizing continuing education. **Carly Sebo**, L.A. Teacher at Lincoln Middle School has been nominated for IEA's Human and Civil Rights Award. **Holly Gansz**, PE teacher at Field, was recently named the Midwest Elementary Teacher of the Year by AAHPERD (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance). Career Service Grants have been awarded to **Holly Ganz**, and **Franny Keyes**, Lincoln C of C teacher. **Holly** will head to

the National Conference for the AAHPERD in Salt Lake City, Utah on April 25-29, 2006. **Franny** will travel to Denver, Colorado on January 11-14, 2006 for the Tenth Annual National School Reform Winter Meeting.

Hard work has paid off for two Franklin teachers, **Megan Sutter**, Primary Instructional Resource and **Kimberly Brania**, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, who have earned Master's Degrees from NIU. **Megan** also facilitates Franklin's first Environmental Club. Speaking of firsts at Franklin, February 13-15, 2006, Franklin 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will be heading to White Pines for the first Outdoor Education program. Fifth Grade Teach-

ers, **Karin Mustari**, **Chris LoPresti** and **Denise Spedale**, as well as staff members, **Bill Casey**, **Karla Jackson** and **Jane Tufts** will accompany the students. The fourth grade team at Franklin, **Tony Belmonte**, **Brenda Kennedy**, **Mary Jones**, and **Erika Keating** completed their Ellis Island reenactment in which students dress like immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island and get a first hand experience of life in this era of American History.

Civil Behavior activities are abundant across the District. Field School teachers, **Kathy Erlandson**, Third Grade and **Ann Ham**, Fifth Grade have partnered to pro-

vide tutoring for third graders who need extra help in the areas of math and reading. On Wednesday mornings, a group of dedicated fifth grade students arrive at 8:10 to work with the third graders. Students form bonds that go way beyond the tutoring sessions. **Mrs. Erlandson** reports, "This is the second year we have provided this program. The children enjoy the group so much, that if we have to cancel for some reason, they get really upset!" **Marlene Petrie's** (I/R, Franklin) fifth grade Language Arts students are coordinating a collection for PAWS to help pets affected by Hurricane Katrina.

## Parent Perspective: what quality schools mean to PR families

by Mary Beth Clarke  
DISTRICT 64 PARENT

In addition to being a District 64 parent, I have tutored a number of District 64 students over the past fifteen years. This has given me the opportunity to work with teachers from all schools within the district. Based on my experience, I feel that the most outstanding thing about District 64 is the quality of the teaching staff. I have found the teachers in District 64 to be dedicated and caring, as well as *well-educated about and always interested in doing what is best for children*. We are fortunate to have an administration in each school that encourages and supports teachers in this endeavor. This goal is also evident in the wide variety of opportunities teachers and staff offer so that our children may become well-rounded individuals – from band and orchestra, clubs, sports and foreign language to resource services, specials and special interest classes offered in middle school.

All four of our children began their education at Roosevelt. The early elementary years there have been so important for helping them develop a good foundation for learning. Every teacher



Mary Beth Clarke with her youngest son

has worked hard to help our children develop not only strong academic skills, but also a love of learning – easy with some and quite challenging with others!

Our experiences at Lincoln over the past four years have highlighted just how focused on child development our district staff is. At a time when children are working to gain independence, they still need a healthy connection with adults in their lives. I once heard Lincoln Middle School Principal, Mr. Blouch report that, based on a student survey, the number of students at Lincoln who reported they did *not* have a connection with at least one adult in the building was in the single digits. That is an incredible feat given the nature of adolescent children! We have sent two

very different children to middle school, and have found the atmosphere at Lincoln to be all about helping them negotiate the challenge of adolescence.

This year, our family has reached the milestone of having our first child leave District 64 for Maine South. Although this year has been an incredible challenge to us as parents, we appreciate District 64 every day for how well our daughter was prepared for high school. She experienced nine incredible years in District 64 with thoughtful and challenging teachers who treated her as an individual and encouraged her to become the best person she can be.

There are many reasons we feel grateful that our children attend District 64 schools. But, I feel strongly that a school district can only be as good as the staff it employs. I am thankful to have found some of the best teachers I have known right here in our district. Our children will reap the benefits of their excellence for years to come!

### TEACHER Talk

Send us your feedback...

E-mail us at: [prea@d64.k12.il.us](mailto:prea@d64.k12.il.us)

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A NEWSLETTER WRITTEN FOR THE DISTRICT 64 COMMUNITY  
BY THE PARK RIDGE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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