

focus on LEARNING

Community Unit School District 200 • January 2006



Patrick Brosnan from Legat Architects points out needed repairs on a recent community tour of the school.

Board President Addresses Hubble Issues

Dear District 200 Residents,

For the past five years, the Board of Education has been looking at various options regarding the future of the Hubble Middle School. Many of you will remember Hubble as the former Wheaton Community High School or Wheaton Central High School at the corner of Main Street and Roosevelt Road. The building has served the community well since its original construction in 1925. But, despite over \$4 million in maintenance and improvement in the past few years, it is showing its age and now needs costly repairs to make it comparable to other District 200 schools.

Before undertaking the kind of renovation required to meet the requirements of the Illinois School Code and the District's own building standards, the Board looked at many other options. In the end, we chose the construction of a new school in the southwest part of the District because that is the least expensive option and, in our view, the best choice for students and the community in general.

It will allow us to build a school that is designed around the middle school program with flexible space to accommodate any future program changes. It will be located closer to most of the students who attend the school,

thus ending bus rides that are as long as an hour for many students. A new school will permit students greater access to technology and give them state of the art science laboratories. It will reduce the interruptions that are created by a near constant flow of trades people called into the school to repair the aging infrastructure.

Aside from the many benefits it will afford students, the construction of a new school on another site remains the most cost effective solution. We believe the land for the new school will be given to the District by the City of Warrenville. The District will cover the construction costs of \$35 million, an amount that will be offset by the sale of the 22-acre Hubble site which is valued at about \$10 million. If the new school were built on the existing property, the cost of the school would be the same, but there would be an additional expense of \$3 to \$5 million to raze the old building and no offsetting funds from the sale of property. The estimated cost of renovating the existing building is \$46 million.

As a Board, we believe that building a new school in the southwest part of the District is a win-win situation for students and the communities served by District 200. The City of Wheaton has expressed interest in seeing

the Hubble property returned to the tax rolls and redeveloped into a multi-use area that serves as a gateway to the City. The City of Warrenville wants its students to attend middle school closer to their homes and has generously committed funds from the Cantera TIF to buy the school site.

The Board has spent countless hours over that last five years reviewing the options. It also formed a citizen's committee to examine how the decision can be implemented. The committee has reinforced the Board's decision and believes construction should start as soon as a suitable site is obtained and construction money becomes available.

Our communities have a proud tradition of supporting students and providing excellent facilities. We hope you will recognize the need to replace Hubble with a new school in another location and support the redevelopment of the existing site. For a more extensive review of the costs associated with this decision as well as a timeline of all that has gone on relative to Hubble over the past five years, please go to www.cusd200.org and click on the Future of Hubble Middle School link on the right side of the page.

For the Board of Education
Andy Johnson, President

Board Continues Plans to Replace Hubble with New School

A citizen's committee has recommended that the Board of Education proceed with plans to build a new middle school in the southwest part of the District and seek voter support for the construction in a referendum. The recommendation is contingent on the District acquiring a suitable site for the new school and the Board satisfying all of its stated requirements for the building.

The City of Warrenton has agreed to buy land for the new school using money collected from the Cantera tax increment financing district (TIF). At this writing, the City is in negotiations for a site in Warrenton and expects a confirmation of the sale at any time.

After years of study and discussion, the Board voted in January 2004 to build a new school to replace the existing one for some of the following reasons:

- It is designed to support the middle school program.
- It increases opportunities for using technology in the classroom.
- It is more appropriately sized for the program and enrollment.
- It provides equity of facilities among the four middle schools.
- It is more energy efficient
- It has flexible space to allow for future program changes.
- It is less expensive than renovating the existing school.
- It offers a longer usable life span than a renovated building.
- It places a middle school closer to most of the population it serves.
- It reduces travel times to and from school.
- It reduces maintenance and custodial costs.
- It creates the opportunity to redevelop the property and expand the tax base.

As soon as a site for the school is identified, the Board will proceed with plans to hold a referendum. The referendum will seek the full construction price of the school, currently estimated at \$35 million, with the understanding that a portion of the \$35 million will be refunded when the Hubble property at Main Street and Roosevelt Road is sold. That property is valued in the \$10 million range.

The City of Wheaton has informally agreed that it wants the property redeveloped and indicates that any project approved for the site will address chronic storm water issues and flooding on nearby Main Street, provide planned traffic patterns and generate taxes to benefit the entire community. They are committed to redeveloping the Hubble property in a manner that will benefit all aspects of the community.

Cost Comparison of Various Options		
Option	Cost	Comment
Build a new school on another site	\$35 million*	Does not include the purchase of the site, which the City of Warrenton has agreed to give to the District. *In addition, it is anticipated the sale of the current site will generate funds, perhaps as much as \$10 million, thereby making the net cost to the taxpayers at about \$25 million.
Build a new school on the existing site	\$39 million	Includes about \$4 million for tearing down the existing school and removing asbestos.
Renovation of existing building.	\$46 million	Based on construction occurring over a four-year period.



Lewis Cravens, construction superintendent, readies materials for the completion of the Wheaton North field house.



Scott Hoecker tunes up for band practice in Wheaton Warrenton South's new classroom.



Megan Walkowicz is one of many students using the College and Career Counseling Centers at both high schools.

Expanded High Schools Bring Enhanced Learning Opportunities

The concrete floors and scaffolding have substantially disappeared and the construction crews are barely visible as the last phase of the high school expansion and renovation project nears completion. Students started the 2005-06 school year with many new classrooms, a College and Career Counseling Center, new entrances to their schools and maps to help guide them to these spaces and many others that were changed by the renovation.

The entire project is expected to be completed in the spring, bringing to a close three years of construction that has turned District 200 high schools into vital learning centers. The mobile units that covered much of the campus at both schools are gone, replaced by two-story

classroom additions with resource rooms for students and office space for teachers.

The large commons areas at both schools augment cafeteria space and are used throughout the day for various purposes, including as a gathering place for those attending evening events. The field house at Wheaton North opened this month and the one at South will open in the spring, providing additional space for physical education classes and extracurricular athletics.

A schedule for community use of the field houses will be developed when construction is completed. The entire project remains under budget and ahead of schedule.

Volunteers Serve District 200 Students

Janine Kallal and Tom Wilson have a lot in common. Although they don't know each other, they have the same love of children and the desire to give back to their community. They are representative of the many residents who give their time and talents to the students of District 200.



"My whole life has always been centered around the kids and family."

— Tom Wilson

Tom Wilson has always loved children. He and his wife Karen had four of their own and now enjoy eight grandchildren. He said the last thing he wanted to do was sit at home after retiring from Central DuPage Hospital.

So, he started volunteering in his grandson's kindergarten class, taught by Becky Filisko, at Sandburg Elementary School. Six

years later, the man, affectionately known as "Grandpa", is at the school three mornings a week. On Friday mornings, he goes to Lincoln Elementary School, where he helps former Sandburg teacher Janine Willhoit with her kindergarten class.

"Tom would volunteer his time to kids around the clock if he could. He's a very generous man with his time and wonderful spirit," said Mrs. Willhoit.

Mrs. Filisko said, "His dedication is unbelievable. Tom has never missed a day of work! He is always here— happy and ready to help. He absolutely cares for all of the students."

Mr. Wilson reads to students, helps them with their counting and letters and does a lot of work for the teachers like copying, laminating and cutting. "I do anything they want me to do," he said.

Tom's goal is to add Pleasant Hill to his schedule next year. His daughter and her family have moved and now there are grandchildren in yet another District 200 school!

Janine, whose only connection to District 200 is living in Wheaton, was encouraged to be a school volunteer 9 years ago by a fellow member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. At that time, she was recently retired from a long-time career as a college Spanish teacher and was ready to tackle something new. "Crawling around on the floor with the children was a far cry from teaching irreg-



"I like it here because the staff is very welcoming and the kids are so cute and funny. They keep you young and on your toes!"

— Janine Kallal

ular verbs to college students," she recalls.

Janine started working with Beth Gunther, a kindergarten teacher, and has since developed a strong working and personal relationship with the veteran teacher, who now is a reading specialist and curriculum leader.

"I'm a volunteer kind of person. I don't like to be on the sidelines," Janine said.

She calls herself flexible and says she never knows what she'll be doing when she arrives at Emerson on Monday mornings. "I've done everything from helping students on reading assessments to copying projects for Mrs. Gunther."

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your neighborhood school or call the District 200 office at 630/682-2000.

Student Scores Increase on State Assessments

Student achievement increased on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) in 2005, providing evidence that the District's multi-year efforts to improve the achievement of all students is working.

Not only did the percentage of students meeting and exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards increase, but the achievement gap narrowed between low and high performing students. For example, only half of the District's third grade students who are designated as low

"These scores are significant because they indicate that all students are learning at higher levels." — Gary Catalani

income—about 15 percent of the District's enrollment—met state standards in reading four years ago. This year, nearly 71 percent did. The scores of third grade white students, the demographic group that represents about 80 percent of the District's enrollment, increased from 86 percent meeting or exceeding standards in 2002 to 91 percent this year.

"These scores are significant because they indicate that all students are learning at higher levels," Superintendent Gary T. Catalani said. "They show that we can narrow the achievement gap among various student populations while still increasing the District's overall performance."

On this year's tests, some 90 percent of the student subgroups increased their reading scores on the ISAT, while 81 percent increased their scores in math. Sixty-seven percent of the subgroups increased their scores in reading on the PSAE, given to high school juniors, while 50 percent increased their scores in math.

Data from all of the subgroups—ethnic, special education and non-English speaking—is available because of the reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. It requires that each subgroup meet their state's learning standards at progressively higher percentages each year or their school will be cited for not making adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Four District 200 schools did not make the required progress one year ago due to low test scores in one or two subgroups. The District intervened with a plan and the resources to help two of those schools meet NCLB requirements this year. The other two schools continue to work with their low performing students to be sure they will meet the standards on this year's test.

"We are reaping the benefits of years of hard work by our teachers, principals and administrative team to improve student achievement," Dr. Margo Sorrick, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services said, noting that all curriculum is articulated and aligned to state standards, local assessments are in place in most core content areas, instruction is targeted for identified students, data is used to determine



Chris Carter, a teacher at Monroe Middle School, is one of many teachers who has helped students increase their achievement on state tests.

which students receive additional support, and entry into support programs is consistent across the District.

During the 2005-06 school year, the District will continue to fine tune its efforts to help all students learn at higher levels. Each school has analyzed its demographic and achievement data and developed an improvement plan with specific goals and strategies to help all students meet the Illinois Learning Standards.

"The schools know who needs help and they have plans to provide it," Dr. Sorrick said. "The District also has an improvement plan with goals to provide schools with the resources and programs they need to improve instruction in reading and math."

Report cards detailing demographic and achievement data for each school may be accessed on the District's web page at www.cusd200.org.

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Your opinions and questions are important to us. Please take a moment to comment on or ask questions about District 200 and its programs. We are especially interested in your suggestions on the type of information you'd like to see included in future issues of **Focus on Learning**. **FEEDBACK** may be delivered or mailed to the School Service Center, 130 W. Park Ave., Wheaton, or faxed to 630/682-2227. Please include your name, address and daytime phone if you would like a response to your comments.

Feedback

District 200's email news service is an easy way to keep informed about issues of interest to the school community. Just go to the District's web page at www.cusd200.org and fill in your name and email address when prompted. You will receive a verification email and subsequent emails about what's going on in District 200.

Receive News Electronically Sign-up on District 200 Web Page

- Inside*
- Hubble School Update
 - High School Construction
 - Curriculum Test Scores
 - Senior Volunteers

News Briefs

- Passes that enable residents 60 years and older to attend many District 200 functions free of charge and enroll in Park District programs at reduced prices are available at the Wheaton Park District Community Center.
- Your help is needed in updating the District's Technology Plan. Please visit the District's web page at www.cusd200.org to access the electronic survey right on the home page! Thank you for your help.
- Veteran District 200 Board Member Marie Slater was installed as president of the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) in November during the group's annual conference in Chicago. She has served the last two years as the organization's vice president. Mrs. Slater was elected to the District 200 Board in 1987.
- Superintendent Gary T. Catalani announced in November that he will serve out the remainder of his contract and retire in June 2007. Dr. Catalani, who became superintendent in 1999, is credited with restoring trust and stability in the school district through his leadership with the Board of Education, administrative team and community. With Dr. Catalani at the helm, student test scores have increased, a referendum to renovate and expand the two high schools was passed, another referendum project was completed to renovate eight schools and build a new one, and efforts to provide a safe and secure environment have been recognized nationally. The Board will begin preparations for a superintendent search early this year.

Budget Close to Balanced Despite Rising Operational Costs

Three years of spending reductions and efforts to implement other operating efficiencies led the Board of Education to adopt a budget that is nearly balanced for the first time in several years. The budget shows revenue increases of less than 4 percent, while expenditures are up only 1.27 percent. Despite the small increase in expenditures, the District continues to incur significant increases in the cost of services over which it has little or no control, such as property insurance, medical insurance, worker's compensation, and tuition for students placed out of the District.

Meanwhile, the Board continues to look for savings and has refinanced debt to save taxpayers \$4.5 million in interest. It also structured the sale of the high school referendum bonds to reduce the projected cost to taxpayers by one third. In addition, the annual levy increase continues to be well under 5 percent, last year's being at 3.15 percent.

The financial outlook for the District remains problematic. The increase in general state aid authorized by the legislature last spring offered little relief as this year's payment is approximately the same as last year and accounts for only 6.5 percent of the District's revenues. Fund balances have absorbed deficits in the past, but those are dwindling and projected to run out as early as next year in some funds and in all funds by 2010.