

focus on LEARNING

Community Unit School District 200 • February 2005



Wheaton North students Giovanni Partida, Tanya Pardungkiattisak and Kelly Simon led their advanced geometry class in the preparation of an article for the *Illinois Mathematics Teacher*.

Wheaton North Geometry Students Get Published

"It was your average Wednesday morning, first period," the article begins. Students in Andy Samide's advanced geometry class at Wheaton North High School were trying to solve a tough problem that the veteran teacher gave them a few days earlier to add yet another challenge to an already demanding curriculum. They were looking for the radius of a circle that was touching one side of a square and intersecting the opposite two corners.

It didn't take long for the class of freshmen and sophomores to solve the problem and then create a series of new ones from the original. Instead of solving them all, however, the class wrote an article that described their original dilemma and challenged other students and teachers to solve the new problems.

That article is being published in the spring edition of the *Illinois Mathematics Teacher*, which is distributed to math teach-

ers throughout the state. It marks the 19th time that Mr. Samide's classes have published articles in the magazine. "You never know what kids will come up with. When they solve a problem like this and then create others from it, it's important for us to share our learning with others," Mr. Samide said.

Mr. Samide has shared his knowledge with District 200 students for 37 years. He retired last year but returned to teach two classes this year. His students say this veteran teacher is one of the best. "He always encourages us to go beyond a problem, to think outside of the box and ask questions," said Tanya Pardungkiattisak.

Preparing an article for publication takes time, but also supports the District's effort to teach writing in all subjects. The students work in groups to introduce the problem, state their findings, and present new problems to solve. They subsequently critique their work, make edits and then have it

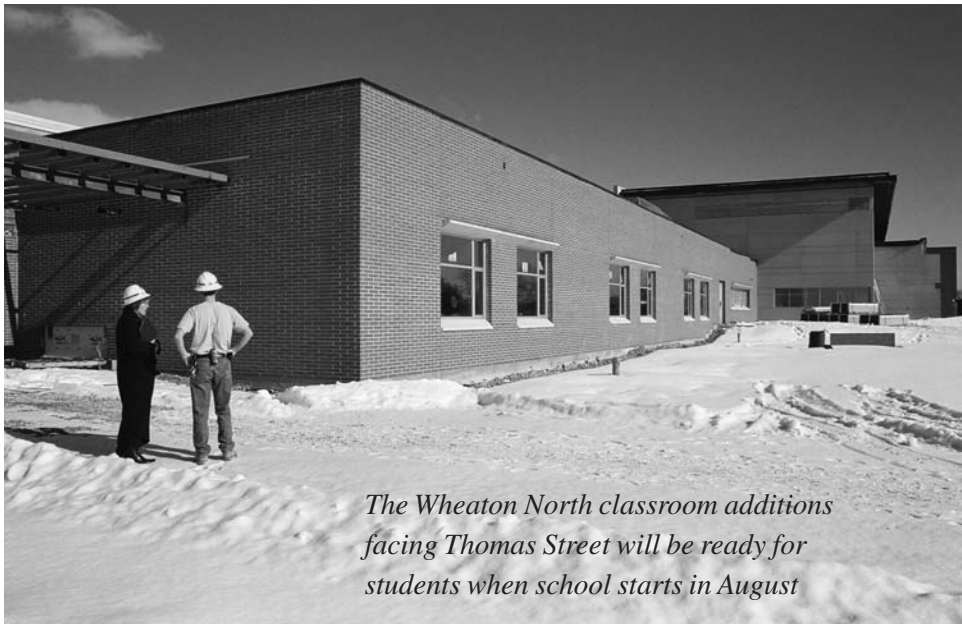
reviewed by an English teacher before submitting it to the publisher.

"Mr. Samide gives us the option of doing these projects, but he also says if we do it we'll have to do more work at home to keep up with the regular curriculum," noted Giovanni Partida, who started the class on the road to solving this particular problem.

"These students are bright enough that they need time to work on problems and think them through," Mr. Samide said, who is known as a teacher who doesn't lecture his classes but instead serves as a resource as students work to solve problems on their own.

That approach to teaching has given Kelly Simon a new way to address questions in other classes: "After Mr. Samide's class, I find myself looking at different ways of solving problems instead of using the same old ways."

Construction Brings Needed Classrooms to District 200 High Schools



The Wheaton North classroom additions facing Thomas Street will be ready for students when school starts in August



Work is nearly complete on the classroom addition at Wheaton Warrenville South High School.

The sites and sounds of construction are plentiful around the Wheaton North and Wheaton Warrenville South High School campuses as crews work to keep the projects moving toward their targeted August 2006 completion date. The \$72 million project is on schedule, under budget, and costing taxpayers one-third less than was advertised during the 2003 referendum campaign. At that time it was estimated that the tax rate in the bond and interest fund would increase by \$.15 per each \$100 of equalized assessed valuation. It actually increased \$.0998 on taxes collected in 2004.

The administration at Wheaton Warrenville South occupied the new office complex over the holiday break to give crews access to their old offices, which are being converted into a new college and career counseling center. In January, students moved into the new performing arts area where there are separate band and orchestra rooms, as well as space for instrument storage. Individual practice rooms will be available to students soon. Meanwhile, work continues on the two-story classroom addition, which is expected to be completed in the spring.

The 20 mobile classrooms will be removed after students occupy the new classroom addition. That will make way for the construction of the new field house on the north side of the school. The school year opened with a new east hallway configuration that improves traffic flow from the north and south sides of the school. Along the hallway are new locker rooms, fitness room, rest rooms and physical education classrooms.

At Wheaton North, where there is less interior renovation, construction is on schedule with the west wing of the two-story classroom addition, which will be completed this spring. Once students are moved into the addition, the 16 mobile classrooms can be removed and construction started on the east section of the classroom addition. The new performing arts area is well underway and scheduled for occupancy in the fall. Construction is also moving ahead on the new field house, which is planned for completion this summer. At that time, a schedule will be developed to invite community use of the new facility.

High School Counseling Gets New Direction and Improved Facilities

When the High School Task Force was forming its recommendations in 2001, it looked into the future and saw a college and career counseling center that provided a variety of resources for students and parents in a systematic way through the counseling staff and technology. That dream is moving closer to reality with the construction of college/career counseling centers expected to open next year in both District 200 high schools and the recent adoption of the District's first defined program for high school counseling services.

where to go or what to do. Now there are specific goals and objectives that complement the educational program.

The new counseling centers will provide service in three important areas: academic development, social/personal development, and career development. Among other things, the new program is designed to help students:

- *acquire the attitudes and skills to be more successful learners.*
- *select courses that enable them to choose from a variety of post-graduation options, including college.*
- *make informed career decisions based on an understanding of their own skills and interests.*
- *understand the relationship among one's personal characteristics, educational training and career options.*

The entire counseling curriculum can be reviewed on the District's web site at http://www.cusd200.org/programs/adopted_curriculum.htm.

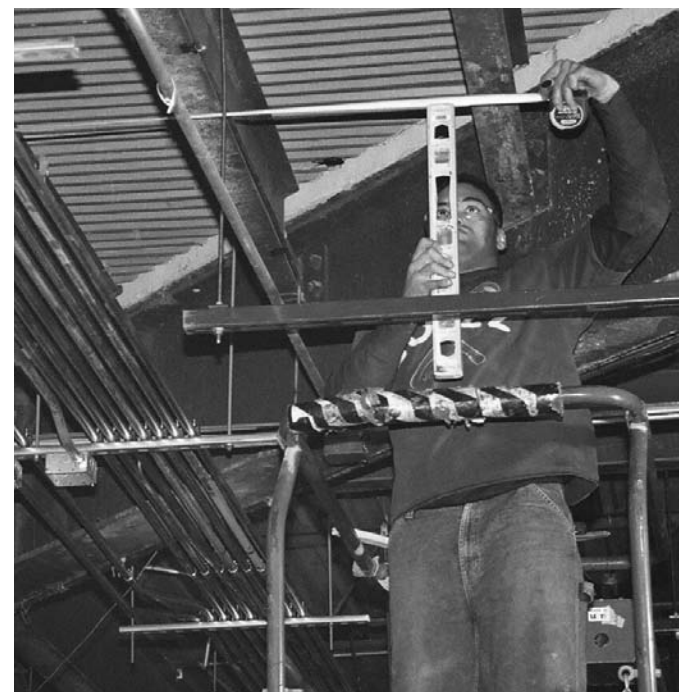
The construction project at both high schools calls for the expansion of the counseling areas to include conference rooms for college and career representatives to meet with students, classrooms for counselors to deliver the new curriculum, space for students to access a variety of college and career information online and through various software programs, and office space to enable counselors to meet privately with students.

“The facilities will finally provide the space that is reflective of the services we know we need to provide students.”

— DR. CHARLES BAKER,
DIRECTOR OF HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

“The curriculum guarantees that all District 200 high school students, regardless of their school or counselor, will have the same counseling experience during their four high school years,” Dr. Margo Sorrick, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services, explained.

In the past, the counselors were pushed in many directions, servicing more than 400 students each, with no formalized guidelines for



The former guidance/administration center is being transformed into the new college and career counseling center at Wheaton Warrenville South.



All Wheaton Warrenville South counseling services are offered from a single classroom while the new counseling center is constructed.

Funding System Continues to Plague Illinois Schools

District 200, along with most other Illinois school districts, continues its struggle to maintain and improve programming with current resources. After three years of budget reductions and fee increases totaling more than \$7 million, dipping into cash balances to cover expenses, and facing yet another year of reductions, the Board found an interim solution to its financial woes. On the recommendation of a citizen's finance committee, it sold \$16 million in working cash fund bonds (with no tax increase) to curtail program and staff reductions while a long-term financial plan is developed. Tim Cole, an auditor from William

F. Gurrie & Co., supported the bond sale and made the following observations during a presentation of the 2004 audit at a recent Board of Education meeting:

- *The school funding system used in Illinois creates financial problems for most Illinois school districts.*
- *Tax rate referendums are now a by-product of doing business and can be expected in school districts as often as every five years due to the impact of the tax cap legislation.*
- *About 76 cents of every dollar spent to operate the District is directed to the salaries and benefits of its employees. (The annual percentage increase in overall employee costs has dropped substantially in the last four years.)*

- *About 72 cents of every dollar received in the main operating funds comes from local property taxes. The growth in property taxes is limited by the tax cap to the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 5 percent, whichever is less. For 2004, the increase is limited by the CPI to 1.9 percent.*
- *It becomes increasingly difficult to balance the increases in the costs of doing business with increases in property tax revenues (historically between 1.6 percent and 3.4 percent) without staff reductions.*

The District will begin developing a long term financial solution following the planning process described below.

Community Participation Invited in Planning Process

District 200 is starting a planning process that is expected to set the direction of the District for the foreseeable future. Because the outcome will help determine the kind of programs and services that are offered to students in the years ahead, many community members have been invited to participate in the process. Opportunities for participation are available throughout February. Those interested in joining a two-hour focus group session, please contact the school district office at 630/682-2000.

Several years ago the Board of Education embraced a philosophy of moving District 200 from good to great, based on the principles described in Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*. To

give guidance to the District's continuous improvement efforts as identified in the book, the Board of Education set as one of its three high priority goals for the year the development of a new vision and mission statement based on the beliefs and values of the entire community.

During the focus group meetings, participants will be asked to give their thoughts on a series of questions. That information and a short questionnaire to be completed by each participant will be used to develop a community survey that will be administered in the spring. The survey questions will directly address the priorities, beliefs and values that residents have for their local public schools.

Information from the focus groups and the survey will subsequently be used by the Board of Education and administration as the basis for developing a new vision and mission statement. These statements will provide the framework for future planning efforts and guide the Board in its decision making.

The Board embarked on this plan as it faced a fourth year of budget reductions with the knowledge that the cuts would impact teaching and learning across the District. Before doing that, members agreed they must have a community discussion to determine the programs and services residents value most.

Search Continues for New Middle School Site

Plans to build a new middle school in the southwest part of the school district continue, with discussions focusing on site identification and purchase and how partnerships among impacted governmental units can move the project forward. A committee working to implement the Board's plan to build the new school identified potentially available sites last summer.

“The construction of a new middle school in the southwest part of the District remains a high priority for the Board of Education. We continue to explore all options that will make the construction of the new school an attractive option for our taxpayers.”

— BOARD PRESIDENT ANDY JOHNSON

After consultation with the land owners or their representatives few of the sites remain as viable options. Discussions with those owners have been ongoing with no agreement to date. The City of Warrenville stands ready to buy a school site in or adjacent to Warrenville if a sale/purchase agreement can be successfully negotiated.

Meanwhile, the committee is working on other aspects of implementing the Board's January 2003 decision to build a new middle school.

Separate subcommittees are:

- *Looking into alternate uses of the Hubble property and the relocation of non-school activities currently held there.*
- *Talking about the timing of a referendum to finance the new school construction and the potential of including funds to complete the renovation of the Jefferson Preschool.*
- *Discussing means of informing, involving and seeking feedback from the community on the implementation plans.*
- *Reviewing the need for attendance boundary changes when the new school is opened.*



Assistant Principal Ken Bonomo and Head Custodian Tria Akines look over one of the school's three boilers, which need repairs as often as three times a week.

Benefits of New Construction

Estimates show that the cost of a new school is significantly less than the cost of renovating the entire existing building to the same standard as other District schools. In addition, new construction has the following benefits:

- *It is designed to accommodate the program rather than fitting the program into a building designed for another purpose. The same program driven design process used in planning the high school renovation and additions will be used for the new middle school.*
- *It is more energy efficient, saving the District more than \$180,000 a year in energy costs.*
- *It has flexible space to allow for future program changes.*
- *It increases opportunities for using technology in the classroom.*
- *It is less expensive (\$6 to \$8 million depending on land costs) than renovating the entire existing school to the same standard as other schools.*
- *It offers the potential to partner with other governmental units to increase accessibility to outdoor space.*
- *It offers a longer usable life span than a renovated building.*
- *It is more appropriately sized for the program and enrollment.*
- *It brings a middle school to the southwest part of the school district, closer to most of the population it serves.*
- *It reduces maintenance and custodial costs as much as \$400,000 a year. (On a recent January day contractors were at Hubble at the same time making plumbing, electrical, heating, and fire alarm repairs.)*
- *It creates the potential for putting the Hubble property on the tax rolls.*

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Receive News Electronically Sign-up on District 200 Web Page

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.

Feedback

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.

Students Give Generously to Tsunami Survivors

Students across the District have responded generously to President Bush's request to support the tsunami relief efforts in south Asia. As they returned from the winter break, students reacted spontaneously, making their own plans school by school to raise money for tsunami survivors. From loose change drives, concerts, and sales of used CD's, DVD's and board games, students have chipped in to help their peers and their families half-way around the globe. Students at Wiesbrook School are directing their contributions to Room to Read, an organization which builds schools and libraries in developing nations and has now committed funds to move the program into countries most impacted by the tsunami. Other schools have chosen the Red Cross, UNICEF and World Vision as the recipient of their contributions. Jessica Simpson, a Franklin Middle School student, captured the sentiments of many in the District as she discussed her school's fund raising efforts: "I think the tsunami was really horrible. Everyone needs to help out where they can. I hope organizations all over the world come together to help raise funds for the tsunami survivors."



Franklin Middle School students Natalie Kiburg, Katerina O'Brady, Kayle Adams and Jen Johnson check out the videos sold during the lunch hour to benefit tsunami survivors. The school's Good Character Task Force sponsored the sale.