

Community Unit School District 200

Administration and School Service Center

130 W. Park Avenue

Wheaton, IL 60187

Phone: 630/682-2000

Fax: 630/682-2227

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Dear Families:

The new school year is underway and the entire staff is anticipating a year of great achievement for our students. As I visited schools during the first week, I observed meaningful teaching and learning taking place in all schools. The eager young faces I saw in the classrooms reminded me once again how important our work is. So it is with great excitement that I look forward to working with our staff, families and communities this year to help all of our students become successful learners.

Board Goals for 2004-05

The 2004-05 school year looks like it will be another active year in District 200's proud history. The Board of Education has adopted three goals for the year, all of which will require the participation of staff, parents and community. The goals focus on the Board's overall effort to move the District to higher levels of greatness. In order to accomplish this, the Board will:

- Renew the District's vision/mission statement to reflect the beliefs and values of the entire school community.
- Develop a long-term financial plan that is consistent with the renewed vision/mission statement.
- Continue implementation of the Board's decision to build a new middle school in the southwest part of the District.

The first two goals are interrelated. Throughout the fall, we will invite students, staff, parents and community members to attend focus group sessions to discuss their priorities for public education in District 200. Based on the feedback received from the focus groups and a subsequent community survey, a new vision/mission statement will be created. This process will provide prioritized information the Finance Committee can use to develop a long-term financial plan.

Budget and financial issues remain a top priority for the District. The Board of Education got its first look at the 2004-05 budget in early August after waiting for the state legislature to decide how much money it would allocate for public education. In the end, District 200 should receive about \$1.5 million more in state funds than it did last year--\$600,000 more in general state aid and \$900,000 in aid for mandated programs. The total in both categories is still \$1.3 million less than it was four years ago. Even with more money from the state and the cumulative effect of \$6.9 million in budget cuts over the last three years, the District faces a projected \$3.5 million deficit this year.

To help the District's cash flow between the September and June property tax distribution, the Board authorized the sale of \$16 million in working cash fund bonds in August based on the

recommendation of the citizens' Finance Committee. This will give us time to work with the community to establish our educational priorities and develop a long-term plan based on the feedback received. We also hope during that time that the state will be able to provide a more predictable revenue stream for public schools in Illinois. By the way, we were able to sell the working cash fund bonds without increasing the tax rate in the Bond and Interest Fund and at a lower interest rate than projected.

The budget, with \$123.3 million in revenues and expenditures of \$126.8 million in the main operating funds, is slated for adoption at the September 22 Board Meeting at Jefferson School. Revenues in this budget are increasing 3.16 percent over last year, while expenditures are increasing only 2.60 percent. The budget may be reviewed online at www.cusd200.org.

The third goal, constructing a new middle school in the southwest part of the District, is moving forward with a citizens' committee examining a variety of issues associated with such a large and important project. The committee met twice before the end of the school year and resumed meeting this month in anticipation of a progress report to the Board of Education in late October. Subcommittees of the larger group met over the summer to work on issues such as site selection, public participation, alternate uses for Hubble, referendum timeline and potential boundary changes.

Planning for the future of Hubble has been a high priority for the Board and Administration for more than three years. Following public meetings, focus groups, surveys, and many discussions, the Board last January voted to replace the existing building with a new middle school in the southwest part of the District. Estimates from our architects and construction managers, who have been very accurate on past projects, indicate that building a new school is less expensive than renovating the existing school to the same standard as other District 200 schools. The Board's decision to build a new school does not carry with it any recommendation on how the existing building and property should be used in the future. That issue will be examined by the committee over the next several months. A timeline and Q&A on this topic is posted on our web page at www.cusd200.org.

Since 1985 the District has renovated or replaced every school except Hubble and Jefferson, the home of our preschool program. When this final phase of our long range building plan is completed, we can direct our resources to maintaining the fine facilities that this community has provided for its young people.

Curriculum and Instruction Interns

A new addition to our elementary and middle school staffs is the curriculum and instruction intern, a full-time District 200 teacher who is spending mornings in the classroom and afternoons working on curriculum and instruction related projects. This new structure gives students greater continuity and quality of instruction because the need to pull teachers out of class for curriculum work is nearly eliminated. The intern is, in effect, job sharing with another qualified teacher, who takes over the intern's teaching responsibilities at midday. The two teachers are working together to be sure that instruction is coordinated and student needs are met. In the afternoon, the interns are working with District personnel to plan, write and update curriculum. They will also be mentors to new teachers and provide training to classroom teachers as new curriculum is developed and implemented. We have reallocated grant dollars to fund this instructional arrangement. No new dollars are being spent for this activity.

In the high schools, curriculum development will continue as it has in the past with teachers pulled from class and substitutes assigned. This is necessary because high school teachers are subject area specialists and we must rely on the expertise of many as we revise our curriculum.

No Child Left Behind Act

For the next few weeks there will be a lot written and said about the impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. It is a complicated set of requirements that have a dramatic impact on school districts across the nation, including those in DuPage County. One of the many provisions of NCLB is the requirement that all subgroups (5 racial/ethnic groups, students who are not fluent in English, special education students, and low income students) make adequate yearly progress (AYP) on state administered tests. To make AYP this year, at least 40 percent of students in each subgroup of 40 or more students must meet or exceed state standards on the test and 95 percent of the students in each subgroup must take the test. Last year only two public high schools in DuPage County made AYP as defined by the law. At this time we are awaiting our District's results, but preliminary data indicates we may have schools that did not make AYP this year.

Last year there were five schools that did not make AYP for participation or test results in one of its subgroups. If any of those schools do not make AYP again this year for the same reason, here's what will happen. If the school receives federal funds to give extra support to low achieving students, the District must give all families in the school the opportunity to attend another school that made AYP. Students would be accepted at another school based on their level of academic achievement and the space available at the receiving school. Details about this option will be made available to parents after official notification is received from the state. If a school does not make AYP and does not receive federal funds, it must develop a more comprehensive school improvement plan that describes how the school will meet the needs of the underachieving students.

You may be aware that all schools currently develop improvement plans. We have done this for a number of years without any requirement from the state. A synopsis of each school's plan is available on the last page of the School Report Card, which can be accessed online at www.cusd200.org, or the entire plan may be examined in each school's office. The plans detail specific measures the school will take to improve student achievement, and you can be assured that we will use all available resources for that purpose.

District 200 values the intent of the NCLB legislation, which is to ensure that all children learn at high levels, and we have worked diligently to comply with all aspects of the law. But we must keep its significance in perspective. It is just one measure of how well a school or school district is performing. For more detailed information about NCLB, you can visit <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nclb/default.htm> or <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=pb>.

High School Construction

Construction at both of our high schools is moving along on schedule and on budget. The classroom additions on the front of each building are well underway and will be completed sometime next spring. We are fully aware of the inconveniences the construction has created for students, parents and staff. If you have high school students, we ask for your patience and cooperation as we work through parking shortages, traffic congestion and new pick-up/drop-off

routes. Construction was planned so that each class would experience some of the benefits of the project while they also endure some of the inconveniences. As they returned to school last month, Wheaton North students saw a new science classroom, a new technical education area and a covered canopy over the courtyard walk. At Wheaton Warrenville South, students are using a new east/west hallway that improves traffic flow, a fitness room, girls' locker room, two classrooms and an entirely new heating and air-conditioning system.

The classroom additions on the front of each school continue under construction and should be completed in the spring. Once they are occupied, the mobile units at each school can be removed. The removal of the mobiles at WWS will also enable construction on the new field house to begin. Meanwhile, please know that it's business as usual at our high schools. Staff and students have adjusted well to new principals and new building conditions and, most importantly, our focus remains on teaching and learning.

Best wishes for a successful school year.

Gary T. Catalani, Ed.D.
Superintendent