

STATE OF THE DISTRICT  
**REPORT**

Office of the Superintendent  
July 18, 2017



KCSD**96**

**SUPERINTENDENT JULIE A. SCHMIDT**

Kildeer Countryside School District 96

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**Introduction**

If we do not take time periodically to review and reflect on our work, we cannot be certain that we are focused appropriately, using resources most efficiently, and meeting needs most effectively. The preparation of this *State of the District* report requires that essential review and reflection—and serves to give readers a comprehensive look at the nature and scope of the important work we do together on behalf of our students, our faculty, and the District 96 community.

This *State of the District* report addresses department highlights, celebrations, fun facts, and—because KCSD96 is a district founded on focused, continuous improvement—the recommended goal areas for the 2017–18 school year.

**Department Highlights**

**Business Services and Facilities and Transportation**

The Business Office helps to ensure financial health and stability—even in the most turbulent times in the State of Illinois. In this department exemplary practices (District 96 has received a clean audit for eight consecutive years) ensure that all stakeholders receive top value for their tax dollars; in fact, we again received Financial Recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education, which is the highest rating available to school districts. We are pleased to have received this highest rating for thirteen consecutive years. Thoughtful financial practices led to the abatement to taxpayers of \$266,200 of debt service in the 2015 tax levy, and we continue to work with the Lake County Board of Review to ensure significant savings of EAV dollars. While hundreds of school districts across Illinois were reporting the inability to open without a state budget, or the inability to remain open for the whole school year, District 96 has carefully planned and projected conservatively to ensure no immediate reduction in programs or services when the state is not meeting its obligations. Our community expects and deserves a high-quality, stable education system, and our thoughtful and conservative financial planning continues to allow us to provide such during uncertain times.

The District maintains an ongoing five (5)-year capital improvement plan that includes maintenance and innovation for District facilities. Projects being completed during the summer of 2017 include, but are not limited to, the following:

**IVY HALL**

- Parking lot seal coating
- Painting of lockers
- Exterior gym doors replacement
- Exterior light replacement
- Installation of additional smoke detectors

### KILDEER

Replacement of exterior doors  
Repair of lighting in main floor classrooms  
Replacement of partitions between classrooms with drywall  
Soundproofing of music room  
Backflow preventer  
Addition of smoke detectors

### PRAIRIE

Exterior doorframe replacement  
Extension of building envelope with concrete solution  
Flagpole lighting

### TWIN GROVES

Sealcoating and crack filling  
Cafeteria ceiling repairs  
Ongoing phase of LES classroom updates with furniture  
Exterior door replacements  
Carpet and LVT flooring in second-floor corridors  
Interior door and frame repair and replacement  
Concrete repair to sidewalks  
Band storage smoke detection

### WILLOW GROVE

Addition of pull fire station  
Backflow preventer

### WOODLAWN

Additional tractor purchase  
Insulation repair  
LES classroom updates with furniture  
Replacement of parking lot  
Replacement of exterior doors  
Gym storage smoke detection additions  
Extended ductwork to technology office

### WILLARD ADMINISTRATION CENTER

Repair and replace landscape blocks  
Replace roof  
Replace furnaces  
Tuck-pointing  
Window repair  
Replace ceiling and lights

The District continues to contract student transportation services through First Student with a continued high on-time percentage of 98 percent. High levels of collaboration continue with governmental agencies—including the Buffalo Grove Park District—which, during their recent statewide conference, received an award recognizing their partnership with District 96.

### **Facility Usage Organizations for the 2016-17 School Year**

As a public entity, we continue to provide access to our buildings and facilities for use by many outside organizations each year. In addition to extensive use by the Buffalo Grove Park District, the following groups accessed our District 96 facilities:

#### Facility Use Organizations for the 2016-17 School Year

American Cancer Society  
Banner Day Camp  
BBYO Jewish Youth Organization  
Buffalo Grove Basketball Group  
Boy Scouts of America  
Briarcrest Homeowners Association  
Buffalo Grove Park District  
Chinese Christian Fellowship Church  
Fields of Long Grove  
Girls Scouts of America  
Girls On The Run Chicago  
Hoops Education LLC  
JCYS Henry Horner Camp  
Lake County Department of Transportation  
Long Grove Business and Community partners  
Long Grove Fire Department (for testing)  
Long Grove Rotary Club  
Martial Arts Group Tae Kwon Do  
Multiple Choices Mothers  
Next Level Performance  
Northern Illinois University  
Schwabens Soccer Club  
Torah Academy  
Twin Orchards Country Club  
Village of Buffalo Grove  
Village of Long Grove

The District was awarded an Energy Efficiency grant in the amount of \$76,000 and leadership in the department is exploring alternative energy sources. Business and facilities leaders were instrumental in bargaining a successful 6-year contract with our certified staff and in updating our district-wide crisis plan.

Director of Facilities and Transportation Randy Warren, who has been with the District for eleven years, retired at the end of June. Mr. Sam Miranda has been fully mentored and trained and is equipped to succeed Mr. Warren. Assistant Superintendent for Business Services Jon Hitcho continues to be a leader in the work of his professional organization—the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO). His presentations statewide include topics focusing on budgeting and finance and “knowing your district financially.” He is in his third consecutive year as the professional development chair for IASBO.

### **Human Resources**

The Human Resources Department is recognized not only for its innovative and high-quality hiring processes and its rigorous and growth-producing two-year teacher induction and mentor program, but also for its high standards related to best practices in the areas of human resources and compliance. Dr. Dalton continues to present at local, state, and national levels on our collaborative new teacher mentoring program, facilitated by both the Human Resources and Curriculum departments, that supports our new teachers at extremely high levels on an ongoing basis. We remain deeply committed to fostering educational leaders through a continuous cycle of improvement.

The Human Resources department fully accomplished the goal of implementing and integrating student growth data into the teacher evaluation process as required by law. To enhance and support the implementation of this requirement, the department created and implemented an inter-rater reliability process for leaders. Additional initiatives included supporting the launch of the Full-Day Kindergarten program at Willow Grove and updating guidance documents related to the evaluation of certified staff. Dr. Dalton also chairs the Board Policy Committee and was instrumental in bargaining our successful 6-year certified staff contract.

Dr. Dalton contributes to the field at high levels as a board member of the Illinois Association for School Personnel Administrators and the American Association of School Personnel Administrators. She also acts as a liaison to both the Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators and the Illinois Association of School Business Officials. In addition, Dr. Dalton serves as a board member of the Illinois Small Colleges Placement Association. Dedicated to her own professional growth, Dr. Dalton also completed the Human Capital Leaders in Education professional certification program through the AASPA. Local, state, and national presentations include sessions focusing on administrative interviewing to fit your culture, supporting HR Boot Camp 101 at the national level, and supporting candidates at Illinois Wesleyan University on how to get their first teaching job.

Heading into the 2017-18 school year the Human Resources department will implement digital interviews into the online application process for support staff and substitute teachers and will continue updating a “look-fors” document to support principals in certified teacher evaluation.

## **Curriculum, Professional Development, and Technology**

The District 96 Teaching and Learning Department continues to have laser-like focus on high levels of learning for all students, with mutual accountability for the success of all. District 96 students continue to benefit from the implementation of best practices across the system around both student and adult learning. The results of this work remain evident in our student outcome data, summarized under **Fun Facts and Celebrations!**

The 2016-17 school year opened with Full-Day Kindergarten for the first time. The remodeling and construction project at Willow Grove has provided a safe, welcoming, engaging environment for our youngest learners. Staff, parents, students, legislators, and community leaders attended the celebratory ribbon-cutting in the early fall. The District 96 Board of Education has recently reviewed student growth data reflecting that our kindergartners have far exceeded the previous growth benchmarks in the areas of math and reading. Not only has the Full-Day Kindergarten program provided more minutes for academic readiness, it also affords time for deeply embedded creative play across the school day. We are excited that our kindergarten students will bring to first grade a more robust and well-rounded kindergarten experience!

The opening of the school year also included expansion of the 1:1 iPad initiative, with 4th- and 5th-grade students able to use their iPads at home. In addition, all grade levels were provided all-day access to an individual tech device for supporting their learning.

Leaders in the Teaching and Learning Department, working side-by-side with District 96 teachers, refined the pacing, assessments, and instructional practices around literacy and our recently adopted literacy resource, *ReadyGen*, at the elementary level. In addition, elementary-level teachers implemented the NGSS (*Next Generation Science Standards*) and newly aligned curricular resource known as TCI. Likewise, the department supported improved practice around the use of formative data with short-term SMART goals at the team level for both elementary literacy and math, as well as for all middle school core subjects. The department continues to foster high-quality instructional practices through ongoing professional learning for coaches and continues through case study work to measure the effect of coaching on teaching and instruction. Also this year, middle school science teachers enjoyed delivering instruction in their newly redesigned and updated science labs. Further, middle school science and social studies teachers worked with newly adopted curricular materials.

With our continued commitment to high levels of learning for all demonstrated in meeting the differentiated needs of all of our learners, we worked as a system to continue to develop both the cultural competence of adults as well as students. Our work to embed both cultural competence and social-emotional learning into instruction through the use of student engagement structures is ongoing.

As a result of a Board of Education adopted goal, the *Guiding Coalition for Interculturalism* (GCI) took shape. The purpose of this deeply committed stakeholder group is to be a learning community that reflects and connects District 96 values of inclusion; aligns parents, educators,

and students in cultural and educational experiences; and engages a wide audience. The group has presented the continuum of interculturalism, the iceberg analogy of culture, the concept of high-context and low-context cultures, as well as learning about members' experiences. Ongoing subcommittees of this group include those focusing on helping staff know more about intercultural holidays and traditions; the degree of representation in the schools—including walkthroughs of each to identify visual representations inclusive of all students; a newcomer's welcome to identify ways to engage new families and help them acculturate to the system; and a talking points subcommittee helping to provide language for staff to encourage their getting to know parents and students in a way that reflects understanding of different backgrounds.

Ongoing work includes next steps for each subcommittee as well as summer work that pulls together curriculum-aligned resources that represent our students' diversity. Also in process are the creation of a District 96 newcomer welcome video and letter and the planning of new orientation evenings specifically designed for newcomers to the area.

One of the most significant multi-year initiatives is the design of the new middle school schedule to be implemented with the opening of the 2017-18 school year. The Teaching and Learning department, in conjunction with Educational Services, facilitated multiple committees making recommendations to the Board for approval. We are thrilled to be offering a new middle school schedule that increases instructional minutes for most core content, provides flexible use of time within core content blocks, and maintains a research-based middle school model. We will be eager to share updates on the implementation of the new schedule next year at this time in the 2017-18 State of the District report.

As we move into the school year ahead, the Teaching and Learning Department will be supporting at high levels the implementation of the new middle school schedule as well as the curricular implementations of middle school social studies, elementary math, and revamped science curriculum to include enhanced STEM activities. In addition, the work around embedding cultural competencies and social-emotional learning will continue.

Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Jeanne Spiller serves as the current past president of Learning Forward Illinois, an organization focused on best practices in professional learning. She continues to coach around the country in best practices in assessment, instruction, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). She is a co-author of the recently published book *Yes We Can! Special and General Educators Collaborating In a Professional Learning Community*, written with former Educational Services Director Heather Friziellie and Superintendent Julie Schmidt. Mrs. Spiller will be presenting on the contents of that educational text at the national Learning Forward conference this coming year and continues to write and submit articles and books for publication.

Kevin Ryan, the District Director of Technology and 21st-Century Learning, has been appointed as the new assistant superintendent of teaching and learning in North Shore District 112. Mr. Ryan's service to District 96 has been incredibly impactful and we look forward to maintaining our professional relationship with him. Katie Sheridan serves as the Director of Language and

Early Literacy and continues her expert focus not only on early literacy but also best practices around biliteracy education.

### **Educational Services**

The 2016-17 school year saw the continued growth of the Exceptional Learners Collaborative—the special education collaborative comprising Districts 96, 103, and 125. The District 96 Educational Services Department continues to lead the collaborative, deeply committed to high expectations and high-quality education in neighborhood schools for all our students, regardless of disability. The 2016-17 school year saw the launch of the autism structured learning classroom at Twin Groves to accommodate students matriculating from like-classrooms at the elementary level. The percentage of students receiving special education services in District 96 continues to tick downward as the system provides more robust interventions and support on an early intervention basis across the system. This was the purpose and intent of response to intervention (RtI) legislation passed years ago. Indeed, District 96 is making excellent progress in meeting the needs of learners and differentiating levels of support.

Likewise, the Education Services department leads in our initiative to continue to embed social-emotional learning across the system and connect SEL to cultural competency. Moving forward, leaders will refine a framework facilitating clear reporting targets.

Director of Educational Services Heather Friziellie was appointed as the new superintendent of schools for Fox Lake School District 114 beginning July 1, 2017. Heather's commitment to high levels of learning for all in District 96 has benefited us throughout the past 11 years. Heather will not only take over the reins in SD114, but will continue to write and present on a national level around special education and PLC practices. Amy Gluck has moved from the principalship at Ivy Hall School into the director of educational services role.

### **Board of Education**

The District 96 Board of Education continues to be recognized by the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) as a high-functioning collaborative Board. In earning this highest designation, the IASB indicates that school boards recognized in this category exhibit best practices on an ongoing basis. Board president Marc Tepper continues to serve on the board of the Lake County division of the IASB as our work at local and state levels continues.

Our Board's focus on the District's vision is ongoing—to become the premier elementary district in the nation, committed to making each and every child reach his/her full potential. Central to this work is their emphasis on bringing District value statements to life. Their yearly visioning work has led not only to the redesign of middle school classrooms and the implementation of 1:1 devices, but also to the visioning and implementation of Full-Day Kindergarten, the creation of the Exceptional Learners Collaborative, and the launch of a brand-new middle school schedule at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.

Board members continue to be involved and deeply committed to protecting the District's financial resources in order to avoid significant implications for our students as the state of

Illinois grapples with financial crisis. The Board projects revenues and expenditures conservatively and plans for every scenario. Their conservative planning led to the Board voting once again to abate over \$266,000 of debt service in the 2015 tax levy. District 96 instructional expenditures continue to be lower than many other benchmark districts, while our student outcomes continue to be higher and exemplar. District 96 Board of Education members are happy to report they are confident in the current levels of financial stability.

Headed into the 2017-18 school year, the Board remains committed to community engagement and clarifying at deeper levels its devotion to the District values we have identified and all share: Model *for* others what we expect *from* others; Every child, every school, every day; Best practice, not first practice; Learning has no boundaries; and Celebrate success.

### **Community Engagement**

The District 96 Parent-To-Parent Network is as active as ever, led by Betsy Fresen. The P2P Network focuses on discussion topics of interest to parents that include both formal presentations and informal discussions. The parent program experts/panel topics in the past year included:

- The Significance of the Pause: Teaching Kids to Slow Themselves Down and to Think Before Acting
- The Top Ten Mistakes Good Parents Make
- Connecting Our Diverse Community
- Making Progress Together in Embracing Our Diversity
- Simplifying Stevenson
- Transition Night for Fifth-Grade Parents
- Navigating the Social Change to Stevenson High School (with Stand Strong)

The P2P Network conversations included:

- Discussing How Families Manage Technology
- How and Why Teens Use Various Social Media Channels
- Helping Children Find Their Passion
- Helping Kids Survive Middle School Social Turmoil
- Developing Philanthropic Instincts as a Family
- Empowering Kids to Deal with School Anxiety
- How Much Parent Involvement is Too Much Parent Involvement?
- Parenting Athletes
- Growing Up in a Smart Phone Generation

In addition, we continue to enjoy high levels of support and volunteerism through parent volunteers. The very dedicated PTO Executive Boards serve each of our schools. Not only do hundreds of parents support PTO events, they also volunteer in schools, classrooms, and for extra-curricular events and activities. Parent volunteer opportunities in our schools include but are not limited to the following:

- Mystery Readers
- PE Helpers
- Field Day
- Orange Ruler Run
- Wildcat Wow
- Stevenson Fun Run
- Field Trips
- Library Support
- School Yard Scamper Fun Run
- Copy Room
- Music Concerts
- Media Center Shelving
- Science Lab Support
- Fifth-Grade Party
- Fifth-Grade Girls' & Boys' Night Out
- Family Picnic and End-of-Year Parties
- Band and Orchestra Boosters
- Staff Appreciation Week
- Cultural Arts Assemblies
- Movie Nights
- Family Reading Nights
- After-School Culture Clubs with Parent Ethnicity Presentations
- Girls-On-the-Run Parent Coaches
- Yoga in PE
- Art Helpers
- Cougar Press
- Artsonia
- Picture Day
- Bake Sale
- Book Fair
- Graduation Activities
- Science Olympiad Coaching
- Wrestling Tournament
- IGSMA Rehearsal Performance
- Locker Clean Out
- Track Meets
- General Classroom Helpers

Parents also continue representing each of our schools on our Parent Review Committee (PRC) led by Assistant Superintendent Jeanne Spiller. This group not only learns more deeply about district-wide initiatives, but also reviews the Parent/Student Handbook, the District calendar, and other District documents. An expanded parent group for the parents of students with disabilities met on a regular basis this year, providing meaningful topics, support, and conversation. The

newest addition to our parent group is the Guiding Coalition for Interculturalism (GCI). Both the GCI and PRC parent groups meet monthly to discuss specific agenda topics.

### **Celebrations**

All staff, administrators, and Board members come together on the Opening Institute Day each year to celebrate the prior year's accomplishments and the opportunity to make additional progress in a continuous cycle of improvement during the upcoming year. Shortly thereafter, we come together to review the Board-adopted goals for the new year. These goals focus on ongoing work to support high levels of student growth and achievement and build capacity in the system.

Each year during a May meeting we share with the Board a thorough summary of progress toward those goals. Simultaneously, feedback sessions with staff in each school begin the goal-setting process for the next year. This is a multi-tiered process leading to a clear development of next steps. When analyzing progress toward goals, we consider multiple qualitative and quantitative data points including, but not limited to:

- NWEA MAP data
- CBM Sweeps data
- Stevenson High School placement results
- Longitudinal student success data
- District formative and benchmark results
- State Accountability measures
- Student placement data

In addition, we scrutinize student participation rates and qualitative indicators of social/emotional learning. Overall, data points continue to reflect that our students are growing and learning at high levels. Over 75 percent of our students continue to exceed their growth targets (these students have made more than one year's growth in one year's time). Once again, just over 70 percent of this year's eighth-grade students placed into advanced or accelerated courses in math and English at Stevenson High School for the 2017-18 school year. We continue to improve placement results for our students and have done so since 2005, when only 26 percent of our graduates placed similarly. In addition, 86 percent of our graduates received grades of A or B in core content classes at Stevenson High School in the 2016-17 school year.

As indicated in the mid-year report to the Board, NGSS science standards have been fully implemented at the elementary level with a new TCI curricular resource to support teachers in teaching to the standards. Likewise, the C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) social studies framework has been fully implemented at the middle school level. A recent adoption will now provide an online textbook. In addition, new PE standards were implemented at the elementary and middle school levels, which continue to adjust fitness expectations along with grading and reporting practices. Ongoing implementation of ReadyGen and Words their Way at the elementary level has gone very smoothly this year. We continue to refine and adjust curricular resources based on feedback from teachers and coaches.

Year 1 of Full-Day Kindergarten implementation has been highly successful. Data indicates that this year's kindergartners have doubled their academic growth over previous years. Not only have the additional instruction minutes benefited kindergartners academically, but also teachers have been implementing creative play during the intervention block. This work with play-based instruction has been extremely beneficial and has supported the initial implementation of the process for play-based experiences for students. Work in this area will continue into the next school year so that play-based instruction can be more fully implemented into the kindergarten curriculum.

All teachers continue to receive ongoing support through job-embedded learning on student engagement structures and practices. In addition, Thinking Maps provide strategies for thinking in the classroom across content areas. We also continue to support teachers in small-group instructional practices and in differentiating instruction. Teams use data from common formative assessments to differentiate instruction for students on an ongoing, fluid basis. Lastly, staff in each building this year benefitted from "EdCamp" or "Unconference" opportunities and each content and grade level team across District 96 participated in two Learning Walks during the year. As confirmed by our teachers, these are extremely valuable learning experiences we will continue to build on peer-to-peer observations and learning.

Identified experts in the field of co-teaching visited all our schools multiple times during the academic year to provide support and feedback to our language development coaches and co-teachers. In addition, curriculum maps have been introduced to the staff in the areas of co-teaching that address relationships, co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessing. Assessments have also been provided to build skills in co-planning and co-teaching as partners in the classroom.

The local author of Mindful Practices has also worked with social workers and principals to begin to build professional development and coaching plans for social emotional learning continuing next year, to be embedded with cultural competency goals. The plan is to create a framework that supports common understanding and vision and alignment with the current SEL framework, with real applications and strategies that can be used by teachers to build student understanding of the three overarching competencies: social emotional learning, cultural competence, and student engagement. District 96 continues its partnership with Chapin Hall through the University of Chicago to begin to survey staff to gather baseline data addressing teacher comfort levels with implementation and the impact of SEL on student indicators such as discipline, time spent out of class, and absences. Research opportunities for these implementations are also being considered.

As stated previously, the launch of a brand new middle school schedule will take place in August 2017. All work related to the curricular shifts necessary has or will be completed by the end of this summer.

We celebrate the work of our new Guiding Coalition of Interculturalism and the work being done in each of our buildings to gain clarity around and communicate in an explicit way how our

mission, vision, and values come to life in the classroom every day. We will continue this work in the 2017-18 school year.

Further, we remain committed to expanding parent opportunities in District 96. In addition to the P2P Network opportunities, more than 42 sessions, opportunities, and information items were provided to parents during the current school year. Lastly, the District-wide parent satisfaction survey mentioned in the 2016 State of the District report was completed in fall 2016. Parents continue to report extremely high levels of satisfaction with the District and our practices. Both the Board and District administrators closely analyzed results of that survey and in November aligned those results with our goal development process.

I continue to be in awe at the commitment to ongoing improvement I observe and experience personally across the District 96 community. Our resolve to improve outcomes for *all* kids is what drives our decisions and goal-setting processes. Our careful consideration of data and reflections upon the system's capacity to do well what we have committed to do fuels the effort. The work that happens every day depends on high levels of collaboration at all levels of the organization; indeed, it is that commitment to collaboration that sets District 96 apart from other school districts as premier.

#### **Fun Facts and Celebrations!**

- ★ Over 356 certified staff members are completing 3,364 curriculum hours this summer.
- ★ The Board of Education recognized our students in over 500 instances in the areas of academics, athletics, and music during the student recognition portion of Board meetings.
- ★ Approximately 20 District instructors are teaching or facilitating 18 courses and book studies this summer involving 140 participants.
- ★ District 96 hosted over 152 visiting educators who came from across the United States and Canada to learn about our Professional Learning Community practices.
- ★ District 96 ran another full summer school program, with over 250 students attending 5 different programs over 2 sessions.
- ★ *District 96 students performed at the **99th percentile** as compared to the rest of the state of Illinois in the area of reading last year.*
- ★ *District 96 students performed at the **98th percentile** as compared to the rest of the state of Illinois in the area of mathematics last year.*
- ★ *District 96 continues to perform as one of the **Top Ten** elementary school districts in the state of Illinois!*
- ★ *The examination of leading indicators correlated with student achievement indicate that District 96 is exceeding expectations at the 97th percentile.*
- ★ Prairie Elementary School has been nominated for its first Blue Ribbon Award from the United States Department of Education!
- ★ District 96 middle schools offered an average of 24 club and activity opportunities this year.

- ★ District 96 elementary schools offered 10-15 club and activity opportunities that range from after-school sports and Girls On the Run, to stock market club and student council this year (an increase from 2015-2016).
- ★ District 96 middle schools offered intramural sports in addition to 10 sports team opportunities.
- ★ Woodlawn Middle School was awarded the Distinction of Outstanding Energy Engineering and Design Project for their solar car STEM project and energy fair.
- ★ District 96 Parent-to-Parent Network offered 7 programs and monthly conversations on a variety of topics aimed at engaging parents and building community.
- ★ Of 46 competing schools in their division, Twin Groves Middle School took 3rd place in the state Science Olympiad Tournament, up from 6th place the year before.
- ★ Woodlawn Middle School is the Illinois Science Olympiad Division B-A state champion.
- ★ District 96 is recognized as an Apple Distinguished Program.
- ★ The District 96 Board recognized 148 middle school students for outstanding performance and participation in the Illinois Music Educator Association (IMEA) and Illinois Grade School Music Association (IGSMA) events.
- ★ Five faculty members were awarded advanced degrees during the current school year, which now means that over 67 percent of faculty hold master's degrees or higher.
- ★ Julie Schmidt, superintendent of schools, was recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Association of School Administrators as a Superintendent of Distinction for 2017.
- ★ The District launched its #inspire96 Twitter campaign using social media to share glimpses into the classroom

### **Recommended Goals for 2017-18**

The high levels of expertise among our administration, faculty, and staff contribute significantly to all we are able to accomplish each school year. Our focus on ongoing improvement and innovative practices does not waver and we continue to build the capacity of each and every person in our organization. To continue to improve will require laser-like focus on what is most important. We will focus on maintaining high levels of student growth and achievement through the implementation of new learning standards to include science at the elementary level and social studies at the middle school level. We will continue to provide high levels of professional development with job-embedded components to equip our teachers with the learning opportunities they need to reach every student in every school every day. With the much-expanded staff and the expansion of curriculum at that level, we will provide high levels of support to ensure that all kindergarten students have a smooth transition. Lastly, we will continue to focus on parent and community engagement through communication and participation. Specific areas of focus include:

- ★ Implement a new middle school schedule to include flexible time during the school day
- ★ Implement the new elementary level math curricular resource, *Bridges*
- ★ Increase levels of mathematical thinking across grade levels
- ★ Connect social-emotional learning and interculturalism through the creation of a framework delivered through student engagement structures

- ★ Improve upon purposeful target- and skill-based instruction during Tier 1 intervention block time at the elementary level
- ★ Increase our understanding and use of instructional practices and playful learning at the kindergarten and early childhood levels
- ★ Provide professional development to increase knowledge of differentiated small group practices and strategies for high levels of independent accountability
- ★ Engage stakeholders across the system in dialogue that clarifies and articulates clearly the District's values
- ★ Improve community engagement levels through topic-specific parent opportunities, parent groups, volunteerism, and visioning/values dialogue

### **In Summary**

What skills will our students need to succeed in workplaces and in careers that are certain to look different from those we know now?

How do we offer them global experiences that take them well beyond the 20 square miles that comprise School District 96?

How can we wring the most from *every* teaching moment to instruct them in math, science, literacy, and more; to hone their real-world thinking skills; to cultivate their creativity and encourage them to risk trying something new; to support them as they grow both socially and emotionally?

These are questions without simple answers. District 96 faculty and our Board of Education are wholly committed to answering them, however, and work diligently and thoughtfully to identify and meet these needs. The effort necessary to accomplish this requires their deep collaboration, commitment to continual improvement, agility to embrace change, and devotion both to being and to developing lifelong learners. Likewise, the resources necessary to accomplish this require a fiscally responsible, engaged Board of Education with a focus on the future as well as a keen understanding of the present. Add to that a parent community actively partnering with their schools for our students' success and it becomes clear why—more than ever—District 96 is the deliberate destination for an ever increasing number of families committed to providing the best educational experience they can for their children. Indeed, this reality is both a celebration and a responsibility that our Board of Education and faculty wholeheartedly embrace for the benefit of every child in every District 96 school—every day.