

District 24 Digital Digest

"Life at Millburn 24"



First documented yearbook cover

Tax Rebate!

The Board of Education has been working hard on behalf of all District 24 taxpayers. We were able to refinance some 1999B bonds with a call date in December. By doing the refinancing, we were able to lower our interest rate and save approximately \$84,507.

What does this mean to the taxpayer? Millburn is not able to keep that money for instructional purposes and it will be passed back to each family through future taxes. We realize this savings is not going to allow families to take a trip or even go out to dinner, but we have 2172 homes in our district that will each get a small piece in the future.

School Search 2009 Bright A+ Award for Millburn 24

Millburn Public Schools have once again earned the School Search Bright A+ Award for our outstanding academic achievements. To receive this award, one must be ranked in the top 5% of Illinois school districts in terms of test data as reported by ISAT. There were only 58 school districts in Illinois who earned this honor out of 868 total districts. This is a great honor for our district. For more information and a complete list of schools, go to schoolsearchrankings.com.

Board of Education

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Our Mission

In cooperation with our communities, District 24 is committed to efficiently preparing students to become productive, responsible members of a changing world by providing a nurturing environment that stimulates a voluntary desire to learn and education experiences that rigorously promote the realization of individual potential and excellence in achievement.

Board Briefs

What has your Millburn Board of Education been doing for the last quarter? See below for some highlights:

- Had monthly financial discussions regarding class size, art, band, gifted education, music, library, athletics (more to come in later meetings)
- Worked on the superintendent evaluation process and goals
- Refinanced an existing bond to save taxpayers \$\$
- Entered into a FREE feasibility study to have Chevron engineers come out to determine long-term financial facilities and maintenance costs
- Led the way in the push for all-electronic communication. We now have BOE packets online for the public to view and we have school and district newsletters in electronic format along with our virtual backpack!
- Hired a new transportation coordinator to streamline the organization and cut costs using no additional money



Shawn Lahr



Bob Buehler



Chris Stream



Ken Dewitt



Bob Reding



Diane Campbell



Lisa Scanio



Millburn West Teacher Recognized

OfficeMax in Gurnee recognizes that teachers put a lot of effort into preparing their classrooms for their students. To accomplish that there is usually a lot of “out-of-pocket” expenses as teachers decorate and furnish their rooms. OfficeMax finances a project called “A Day Made Better” and asks for teacher nominations. This year, kindergarten teacher, **Lisa Jazo**, received this award. The \$1,000 worth of prizes from Office Max included a printer, digital camera, leather desk chair, and many most-appreciated office supplies. Lisa also received a beautiful bouquet of flowers when this well-deserved distinction was announced.

Congratulations, Mrs. Jazo!



ISAT NEWS

- The Daily Herald did a story on whether or not the teacher salary was an indicator of how well schools did on the ISAT test. They found no correlation. Interestingly enough, Millburn was listed as the 7th lowest paid in the area, yet had some of the highest test scores and continued to make AYP each year. Millburn taxpayers are getting a good value for their taxes.
- The Sun-Times did a ranking of the top 100 middle schools and Millburn Central ranked 99 out of 1386. Millburn West ranked 78 out of the 1386 total. As for the elementary schools, Millburn Central ranked 288 and Millburn West ranked 164 of the 2205 total elementary schools. This is a phenomenal state ranking.
- The News-Sun ranks Millburn School District #24 in the top 10 according to a composite of our overall ISAT scores. We are among good company in our rankings.

Composite ISAT Scores by District-Lake County

Ranking	School District	ISAT Composite
1	Lincolnshire-Prairie View #103	97.7
2	Kildeer-Countryside #96	96.3
3, 4, 5	Lake Forest #67	96.1
3, 4, 5	Deerfield #109	96.1
3, 4, 5	Prairie Crossing Charter School	96.1
6	Bannockburn #106	95.9
7	Oak Grove #68	95.4
8	Aptakisic-Tripp #102	95.3
9	Libertyville #70	94.8
10	Millburn #24	94.2
11	Barrington #220	93.0
12	Lake Bluff #65	92.9
13	Emmons #33	92.7
14	Lake Zurich #95	92.1
15	Fremont #79	91.7
16	Rondout #72	91.3
17	North Shore #112	89.8
18	Hawthorn #73	89.7
19	Fox Lake #114	88.8
20	Mundelein #75	88.4
21, 22	Lake Villa #41	87.3
21, 22	Wauconda #118	87.3
23	Woodland #50	86.7
24	Antioch #34	86.6
25	Winthrop Harbor #1	86.4
26	Gurnee #56	85.8
27	Grayslake #46	85.7
28	Big Hollow #38	83.8
29	Diamond Lake #76	80.1
30	Grass Lake #36	79.3
31	Gavin #37	78.8
32	Beach Park #3	75.1
33	Zion #6	67.6
34	Round Lake #116	66.8
35	Waukegan #60	64.6
36	North Chicago #187	54.7

District 24 Financial Update

One of the questions we hear quite a bit at Millburn is "How are we doing financially? Will we have to make more cuts?" This concern is very understandable given the mass cuts last spring eliminating 1.2 million dollars. In the short term, we do not anticipate further cuts for next year as long as we continue to borrow up to 3.7 million each year in tax anticipation warrants. As we look ahead, however, we face difficult decisions with regard to the District's financial situation.

Our goal is to continue to provide each District 24 student the high quality education for which Millburn is recognized. In the next year, we project that tax revenues will be even lower while expenditures will continue to increase. While it might appear that it would be easy to just hold steady and not expend any more dollars, the reality is that our vendors, contractors, utility companies, and employees need to be paid, and our expenses continue to rise between 4-7% each year. That is what causes us to spend more than we take in each year. While we feel it is important to break this cycle, we also do not want to do that at the expense of not giving our students an appropriate education or to decrease the quality and opportunities they currently have.

The Board of Education has been active in examining our program costs and taking steps to address our long-term needs. They have held monthly budget discussions specifically geared to programs, class sizes, and other major ways in which District 24 expends dollars. They have refinanced an outstanding bond and rebated that savings to the taxpayers. They are currently in the midst of a feasibility study that will project maintenance and energy costs for the next 20 years. Millburn has managed to keep employee costs at one of the lowest in the area. Our entire staff makes less than the state average and certainly less than most districts in Lake County.

The ideal scenario would be to pay down the debt over time, but we had to look at what that would cost us in terms of staffing. The Board looked at what it would take to reduce our expenditures by \$750,000 to \$1 million per year for 5 years. In terms of staffing, we would have to reduce 20-25 teachers per year for that entire time. Millburn employs only 240 staff members in all so this kind of reduction would severely cripple many programs and significantly increase class size well beyond what we currently have. Given the situation and the level of educational quality we would like our students to experience, the Board concluded that the best thing we can do for now is to hold our borrowing steady, but not increase it at this time.

That brings us to what will happen over time. Although we can continue on this path for a brief period, we cannot continue on it forever. At some point, financial decisions will have to be made. If we keep our debt the same, to pay the increased expenses, we will have to make proportional cutbacks elsewhere. We will either have to ask for a tax increase or we will have to gather community information about further proportional cuts.

The good news is that although we have been keeping our operating costs down, we do rank very high in the county and at the state level for our test scores. Millburn District 24 continues to provide a quality education for all of our students at both schools - Central and West. Please see our website for our current rankings this year.

Millburn remains on the state financial watch list. The Board of Education is committed to reviewing every program and discussing the merits of each. We continue to look for innovative ways to save in other areas and decrease our debt.

As your elected officials, the Board of Education members want to know what is most important to you as users of the school. Feel free to talk to any of them or to email them at boardofeducation@millburn24.net. You may also wish to talk to me or email me at emaue@millburn24.net. All input is welcome. We are almost a year away from having to make such a decision, but we want everyone to know what is on the horizon in plenty of time. We will continue to update you about our finances periodically.

Written and edited by the Millburn Board of Education

Homework for Millburn Teachers

So, what do the teachers do on inservice day? It is a question we are often asked and we are very happy to be able to report to the community that we take professional development seriously and that we are true believers in the continuous learning process. If our teachers remain current in the latest methods, your children will be the recipients of a cutting edge education and ready for success in a global community.



On October 9th, our last institute day, our teachers were able to hear Dr. Cathy Vatterott from the University of Missouri speak and do breakout sessions. The topic was “Rethinking Homework.” We heard a lot about the 10 minute rule—that is 10 minutes for every grade. If the child is in grade 3, they would have 30 minutes of homework, if in grade 4, 40 minutes, and so on. We also went over the purposes of homework: practice, checking for understanding, pre-learning, and processing. We discussed quality tasks vs. busy work and differentiating homework assignments. For example, Dr. Vatterott tells us about common sense in homework in the following way:

- If we know students differ in readiness, why would we give everyone the same assignment?
- If we know students differ in working speed, why would we expect slower students to spend *more* time instead of giving them *less* work?
- If we know students have responsibilities and activities after school, why would we give students an assignment at 3 PM and expect it back at 8 AM the next day?

I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that we had some excellent discussion and group work during this day. We went over the current research regarding homework at the elementary grades vs. high school. If you are interested in this topic and we have piqued your curiosity, please feel free to ask any of us about this or go to www.homeworklady.com for more information. You may be surprised at the information you find there!

Eighth Graders work on ceiling tile project



From Dr. Cheryl Kucera, Director of Curriculum

CURRICULUM CORNER

The first months of school have certainly been busy ones for the students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Not only have the students been getting used to a new grade, new books, and new teachers, but they have also participated in MAP and AIMSWEB testing. The purpose of these tests is to help teachers, students and parents learn about areas of academic strength and areas of challenge. It helps focus teaching and learning so that students can have a successful school year. Parents and teachers shared some of this information in parent-teacher conferences. In middle school, the students led their own parent-teacher conference.



This year we are benefiting from a grant for which we applied last year. As a result of a pilot program last year, we have obtained a 3-year shared-grant making three programs available to us. These programs are Reading Plus, Lexia, and Symphony Math, and they are technological computer-based learning activities to help our students who sometimes struggle with math and reading.

To support some our students in grades 4 to 8 and help them improve their speed and comprehension in silent sustained reading, we are giving them an opportunity to work in Reading Plus. This program takes about a half-hour, three to four times a week, on the computer. Students should be able to improve not only their speed, but also their comprehension. It will definitely help them prepare for the large amounts of reading they will have in high school. This program can even be used with adults who wish to improve their speed and comprehension to help them in their jobs and other activities. If you would like to learn more about this program, you can visit the website at www.readingplus.com.

If you have any questions about these programs or about anything concerning curriculum or assessment, please contact me at 847-356-8331, Ext. 2898. I would be happy to address your concerns or answer your questions.

More programs...

TESTING DATES TO REMEMBER

ISAT Testing - March 2-12

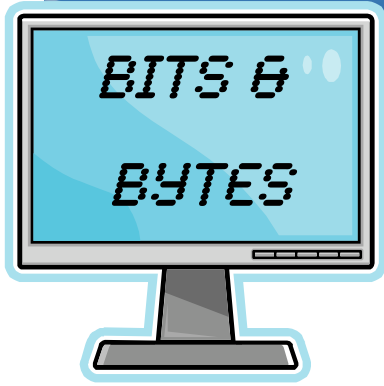
Spring MAP Testing in Grades 2-8 -
April 7-20



Fields of Flowers on Tempel Farms

Another intervention program we are using is called *Lexia Learning*. This program is appropriate for students in grades Pre-K to 6+. Lexia Reading is a web-enabled reading program designed to help students master basic reading skills. Students work on Lexia for 20-30 minutes, three to four times a week. To learn more about this program visit their website at www.lexialearning.com

Symphony Math is designed to help students in grades K-5 develop a strong mathematical foundation in terms of concepts and applications. The program provides an opportunity for young students to develop and practice important mathematical ideas such as: number conceptualization; one-to-one correspondence; and part-to-whole relations. Symphony Math extends these important ideas to math operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and understanding of place value. It does not depend on a student's ability to read as it has a strong auditory component. Students work on Symphony Math for 25-30 minutes a week, three to four times a week. To learn more about this program visit the website at www.symphonylearning.com.



FROM THE TECH TEAM

In the blink of an eye, or a click of the mouse if you prefer, one quarter of the year has flown by. We have been very busy with the deployment of new equipment we were able to purchase with government stimulus funds. The money allocated to school districts came with specific guidelines as to how it should be spent. Special services teachers received new computers and a dedicated printer. We were also able to invest further in interactive whiteboard technology. We purchased 18 Mimio Interactive units, which will be available to both special education and regular education teachers and students. Additionally, we will be able to provide extensive, ongoing training for teachers using some of our own resident experts who are ready and willing to share their knowledge and experiences with this engaging instructional tool. Each library will receive new computers as well. The existing computers in the libraries will be used to replace some of the last older models in the classrooms.

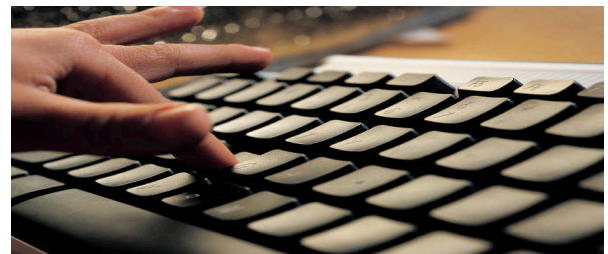
Our district website continues to grow. It is exciting to monitor the usage statistics and see how often it is accessed each day. Based on the feedback I have received and the suggestions offered, our community has responded well to moving toward a digital communication environment. The virtual backpacks alone have saved countless hours of copy time as well as many reams of paper. We will also be using our website periodically for gathering data. A link to a community survey was sent via the weekly newsletter from building principals and a link to a technology survey will soon follow.

Each year, it seems we are able to introduce skills earlier with students as so many of them interact with a computer almost daily. In the classroom, our students in first grade are beginning to explore the Internet and navigate to various websites. We use content-based software that reinforces basic skills taught in the classroom. Second graders are finishing up a project using KidPix incorporating creativity and the use of various tools such as paint, text, and draw. Our third graders are beginning to learn PowerPoint after just

finishing up working with Microsoft Word. They have learned how to add word art, text, pictures, and animations to documents. Fourth graders continue to work with Word. Building on what they learned in third grade, they work with headers, more advanced text options, and formatting of pictures. Fifth graders are working in Excel. They have created a book list of the last 5 books they read. They then use this data to create a table and will learn to use formulas such as Sum, Average, Min, and Max.

Our middle school students use the skills taught in grades 1-5 to complete larger, more in-depth projects. Currently, our 6th graders are sharpening their keyboarding skills and will begin podcasts the week of Thanksgiving. Seventh graders learn the basic database skills. They also learn to use Keynote, which is a presentation program much like PowerPoint. They create some of their own music using GarageBand and embed this into their Keynote presentation. They will also get an introduction to iMovie. Eighth graders are currently working on a collaborative writing project that includes peer editing via a classroom wiki. Students will then use Pages to create a magazine incorporating layout and design skills. Using iMovie they create a project involving script writing, story boarding, and image creation. They learn to edit video clips and use either royalty free music or their own clips created in GarageBand.

In addition to regular content, our students receive ongoing instruction on Internet safety and acceptable use of technology.



Early Childhood Screenings

Millburn School District offers screenings for preschoolers with *suspected developmental delays*. Developmental areas evaluated include speech and language, small and large motor skills, and pre-academic skills. The next screening will be held on the morning Wednesday November 25 2009, BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. This is available to district three and four year olds. The screenings take about an hour.

Don't get discouraged if you are not able to schedule in November. Another date available is Friday, December 18th. If you would like to schedule an appointment, call 847-356-8331 x2908.

More ceiling tile art by our talented 8th graders!



Special Education Parent's Guide

The Special Services portion of our district website is currently under development. The first posting will be a document entitled: **Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois**. You can find this document by clicking the following link:

<http://www.millburn24.net/district.cfm?subpage=36123>

The guide is for parents, teachers, administrators, and others to learn about the educational rights of children who have disabilities and receive special education and related services. — It has been revised to incorporate the changes made to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the Illinois special education rules and regulations, which became effective June 28, 2007.

Special Services Webpage

Since the Special Services webpage is currently under construction, we ask that you please watch for new postings and links in the coming weeks and months.





Dear Millburn Parents and Community,

We have much to be thankful for as we wrap up a great fall season. I would like to highlight some of what has been happening at Central up to this point!

- Millburn once again received the “2009 School Search Bright A+ Award” for academic achievement.
- 93% of all students passed the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT)
- The marching band joined other area feeder schools to march at the Lindenfest parade, and the Warren H.S. homecoming parade.
- The boys’ cross country team qualified for the state tournament, and one female runner, Heidi Doden, qualified as an individual runner.
- The soccer team finished the regular season in first place and placed second in the conference tournament.
- The 8th grade girls’ volleyball team went undefeated at 18-0 for first place in the conference.
- The 6th and 7th grade girls’ volleyball teams had very successful seasons with winning records.
- The band and choir joined forces to perform an outstanding fall concert with less than 6 weeks of preparation.
- The PTO and Foundation hosted two great community events in the golf outing, and the fall festival.
- The 8th annual 24hr Challenge was a great success with over 300 middle school students participating. Over \$7000 was raised for charity.
- The 6th grade enjoyed a successful outdoor education trip to Camp TimberLee. (They were actually at TimberLee during the three days it did not rain in October.)
- Diego Torrez, a 5th grader, discovered an actual arrowhead while on the Mighty Acorns fieldtrip to Ethel’s Woods. We don’t know of any other similar discoveries at Ethel’s woods.

As you can see, we have had an exciting start to the school year. I am excited about how we started, and I am looking forward to the great adventures ahead.

Keep in touch,

Mr. Lind, Principal
jlind@millburn24.net
847-245-2800



Dear Parents and Community,

We have much to be thankful for as we wrap up a great fall season. Here is a quick summary of some of our 1st quarter highlights!

- Millburn West received the “2009 School Search Bright A+ Award” for academic achievement.
- Scored in the top 5% of all Illinois schools on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT)
- The marching band joined other area feeder schools to march at the Lakes H.S. homecoming parade.
- The boys’ cross country team qualified for the state tournament. Millburn West sent a few students to compete in Bloomington.
- The soccer team finished the regular season with a winning record.
- The 7th and 8th grade girls’ volleyball teams went undefeated with a 12-0 record for the season while winning first place in the conference tournament!
- The 6th grade girls’ volleyball team had very successful season with a winning record.
- The choir has organized and started practice with approximately 40 participants.
- The PTO and Foundation hosted two great community events in the golf outing, and the fall festival.
- The 8th annual 24hr Challenge was a great success with over 300 middle school students participating. Over \$7000 was raised for charity.
- The 6th grade enjoyed a successful outdoor education trip to Camp TimberLee. (They managed to have fun and learn so much despite the rain!)
- We hosted a Diabetes Walk and raised over \$7000 for diabetes research and received almost 1000 dollars worth of equipment for our elementary PE department.

We have accomplished so much in a short period of time already this year. I look forward to the many challenges and accomplishments that lie ahead.

Take Care,

Jake Jorgenson, Principal
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847-245-1616