



# FRANKFORT SCHOOL DISTRICT 157-C

Winter 2016

The Learning Connection Newsletter

*A message to District families from your Superintendent*

This issue has a special section about the Education Foundation's annual fundraising auction. The Foundation works very hard and contributes greatly to the education of our students. Please save the date of Friday, March 11, to join us at this event at Prestwick Country Club.

You will also see articles about the caring nature of our students and families. We were so proud of the efforts coordinated through our Charitable Giving Committee. Through these efforts, the children were able to help those less fortunate all throughout the fall. Food Drives for the Frankfort Township Food Pantry are also ongoing. Chelsea's took place in November, Grand Prairie's is scheduled for February and Hickory Creek's will be held in April. Thank you for your generosity in supporting these efforts by the children.

As always, if you have any questions, please call the District Office at 815-469-5922.

*Dr. Maura J. Zinni*

## Teacher Leaders improve instruction and support teachers

A new Teacher Leader role has been implemented in the District this school year to improve instruction and support the teaching staff at all schools.

At the November Board of Education meeting, the Board saw a presentation about the new Teacher Leader role from Director of Curriculum & Instruction Janet McClarence and the District's Teacher Leaders Sarah Margalus, Colleen Reiser, Tricia Dotson and Barb Shanahan.

The Teacher Leaders support the following building goals: English Language Arts grades K-2 for small group writing and conferencing in the writer's workshop at Grand Prairie, English Language Arts grades 3-5 for literacy in guided reading instruction at Chelsea, and English Language Arts grades 6-8 for literacy in scaffolded reading instruction at Hickory Creek.

The role of the Teacher Leader was crafted last summer using data to set goals for teachers. The Teacher Leaders worked with a consultant and have continued professional development throughout the year. Teacher Leaders serve as a resource provider, data coach, instructional specialist, classroom supporter and mentor, leader and learning facilitator and a catalyst for change.

Ongoing formal and informal sessions with the Teacher Leaders are scheduled for teachers at all schools so the teachers can discuss areas of concern and learn new teaching strategies.

Planning sessions with the Teacher Leaders include analyzing student work, reviewing Common Core standards, goal

setting for students, personal goal setting, reflecting on lessons, discussing best practices in terms of lesson delivery and other pertinent topics.

Since implementing the program in first quarter, the District is seeing gains in reading by the students, in some cases 100 percent improvement in increased knowledge in at least one area. Grand Prairie Elementary School Principal Eileen Nelson stated, "Working with the Teacher Leaders makes the teachers feel more confident. It is extremely helpful as an administrator to have the extra support."

Teacher Leader Colleen Reiser pointed out the advantages of bringing strategies that are working well in one building to another building. She stated, "The biggest benefit of this is the vertical articulation and working together collaboratively is essential." At the meeting, the Teacher Leaders thanked the Board for implementing the new program. Teacher Leader Tricia Dotson stated, "I thank the administrators at all levels for working to support us. We will grow and progress and continue to impact students and teachers through participation, brainstorming and becoming a think tank." Chelsea Principal Sharon Paver-Nepote stated, "The best thing is that once our teachers are trained they can become trainers themselves."



Teachers Leaders Sarah Margalus, Colleen Reiser, Tricia Dotson and Barb Shanahan working with teachers during Institute Day.

## Students teaching students

A special collaboration between Hickory Creek and Chelsea Schools focused on perseverance. The Chelsea fourth graders are completing an English Language Arts study about perseverance. The Hickory Creek Select Jazz Band came to their school to provide biographical information and perform music selections by various jazz composers who had to persevere during the Great Depression in order to become successful.

The Chelsea students are reading the children's novel "Bud, Not Buddy" by Newberry Medal-winning author Christopher Paul Curtis. The story takes

place in 1936 during the Great Depression with ten year old Bud using perseverance and positive character to get through some hard times.

Students in the Hickory Creek Select Jazz Band provided biographical information about songwriters and musicians Duke Ellington, Ray Henderson, Hoyt Axton, Eddie Harris and Jerry Lordan. Then, along with special guest Ben Clark, performed songs by those artists. Band President Cameron Kavanaugh encouraged the fourth graders to join jazz band when they get to the middle school. He stated, "Jazz Band is a great experience and super fun." The Hickory Creek Band Directors are Dana Ruff and Doug



Adams. Ben Clark is the Jazz Director at Lincoln-Way East High School.



## 157-C lowers 2015 tax levy for existing taxpayers and abates taxes

For the past five years, the Frankfort School District 157-C Board of Education has held the line on the school district's tax levy and is pleased to report that it plans to do so again this year. Using a combination of debt service fund abatements from existing reserves and ongoing cost containment strategies, the district will actually be able to ask taxpayers for a little less in tax levy dollars than in 2014, with only nominal growth of about \$500,000 related to new construction that was added to the tax rolls in 2015.

Board President Gina Briese stated, "We appreciate the support of our district. We're proud that as a Board we are fiscally sound and being responsible with the taxpayers' money." The Board has maintained a goal of keeping flat the district's overall levy to provide tax relief to the community during these challenging economic times.

This year, the Board directed the Administration to again review the district's debt structure, abatement options and cost containment strategies in relation to how the current projected equalized assessed valuation (EAV) for 2015 might impact the district's levy extension and tax rate.

The Board approved the 2015 tentative tax levy on November 18th, held the public hearing and approved the final levy on December 16th. The total levy for all tax capped funds is estimated to be approximately \$26.874M. When factoring in the additional obligated debt services fund needs of about \$4.124M, and a \$600,000 abatement of those debt services fund needs from existing reserves, the total levy request is expected to be about \$30.40M. This is a few hundred thousand



*Board of Education members (l-r front) Secretary Edie Adamski, President Gina Briese, Vice President Dr. Brian Sasso. (l-r back) Superintendent Dr. Maura Zinni, Board members Kevin Regas, Tom Reidy, Edith Lutz and Mike Turner.*

dollars greater than the total levy requests and extensions from the past five years (about \$29.25M to \$29.77M during that time) and represents only growth in the overall levy from taxes generated by new property added to the tax rolls in 2015. Existing taxpayers are not being asked to pay more for the operations of the school district, and as a matter of fact they are being asked to pay a little less.

District 157-C again received notice that it has maintained its prestigious "AAA" bond rating from Standard and Poor's Rating Services, showing the ongoing financial strength and stability of the school district. Only a few dozen districts in Illinois, and less than 100 school districts in the United States, have achieved/maintained this rating in 2015. District

157-C has earned the "AAA" bond rating for the past twelve consecutive years. The district's thoughtful strategic planning and meticulous financial records provided Standard & Poor's assurance of their evaluation and contributed to District 157-C again earning the top rating with a stable outlook. The district maintains fund balance reserves that typically cover six to twelve months of expenditures in most funds, and it has again been placed in the financial recognition category by the Illinois State Board of Education for its sound finances and stable accounting practices.

District 157-C Board members have made a commitment to work towards keeping the levy stable and only allowing for new construction growth. Per Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Curt Saindon, "The Board has sent a clear message to the administration and the community over the past five years that it is prepared to use a combination of resources and strategies to do whatever it can to keep the overall tax levy stable for the benefit of the taxpayers in this school district. The school district will abate taxes by using existing reserves this year, so that it does not have to ask for any more tax dollars than is absolutely necessary."

The Board and Administration continue to look for ways to reduce costs throughout the district without affecting the quality of educational programming. Mr. Saindon additionally stated, "We are extremely proud of the responsible and thoughtful approach our Board and Administration have taken toward both financial management and strategic planning, and with an "AAA" bond rating and placement on the State's Financial Recognition list, we believe that our efforts have not gone unnoticed."

## PARCC test results from the state released to parents

Last Spring, Illinois students in grades three to eight participated in the new state assessment called the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC.) It replaces the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT.) The PARCC assessment marks a significant change from the previous assessments and the first year results will serve as a new baseline.

District 157-C students in grades three to eight were tested in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. In every grade in the district, the students performed above the state average. It should be noted that District 157-C administered the test online and it was the first time its students experienced this type of testing format. The students found the new format to be engaging, yet challenging.

The PARCC tests measure whether students are meeting new, higher academic standards and mastering the knowledge and skills they need to progress in their K-12 education and beyond. This test included more complex skills like critical-thinking, persuasive writing and problem-solving, skills that were not measured on the previous ISAT assessment.

The new test also marks a change in the way student performance is reported. The ISAT was measured on four levels with two considered proficient and two not. The PARCC scores show how each child performed on each portion of the test. It also reveals their overall scores which fall into one of five performance levels. Those at levels 1 and 2, and some at level 3, need greater supports to understand content while levels 4 and 5 have shown a thorough understanding of grade-level content.

District 157-C Superintendent Dr. Maura Zinni stated, "Scores may look different and lower on this new test. That does not mean students are learning less, it means the tests have changed and are asking students to meet a higher bar. The district will be using the report information to plan for instruction and support student learning. Our administrators and teachers will work with those children needing additional supports to understand content. Parents can use this information to understand their child's needs and strengths to work in tandem with the teachers and school to support their child at home."

As administrators and teachers analyze the PARCC results, they will be looking for impor-

tant information to help them guide instructional decisions while being cautious about an over-reliance on just one test. The information that is gathered from the TerraNova test, District 157-C's local assessment, and day-to-day classroom performance, in addition to the PARCC results, provide a balanced view of teaching and learning in District 157-C.

Dr. Zinni continued, "As a final thought, I want our parents to know that our students and teachers take testing seriously, but we also believe there is much more than a test score that defines our students. We are proud of the fact that our children display character traits every day that could never be measured on a standardized assessment, yet we know are so important to their development and life-long success."

District 157-C hosted a workshop for parents on January 12 to help them better understand their child's assessment reports from TerraNova and PARCC along with some strategies to use at home. District and school report cards that contain a summary of performance for all District 157-C students can be viewed at the District's website, [www.fsd157c.org](http://www.fsd157c.org).

# Coming together to support our troops

District 157-C families, students and staff supported our American soldiers for the holidays. Through the District Charitable Giving Committee, the schools collected items and organized gift packages for the men and women who are serving in the armed forces. Frankfort community members were also invited to join the schools to support this effort.

As part of the District's Charitable Giving effort, the program was organized by teachers Becky Cleveland for Grand Prairie Elementary, Tammy Szkolny for Chelsea Intermediate and Cheryl Donovan for Hickory Creek Middle School.

The collection took place from Veterans Day, November 11, through November 20. Hickory Creek participated in the

collection and sent their items to Grand Prairie and Chelsea for inclusion in their packages. Hickory Creek students also gave out gift packages to veterans visiting their school on Veterans Day.

Christmas stockings, candy, personal care products, snacks and other treats were placed in the packages and mailed to the troops along with thank you cards written by the students. Popsicle sales were held at the schools to help pay for postage for the packages.

A grand total of 77 boxes were mailed to the troops, with 64 boxes going overseas and 13 boxes stateside.

District 157-C gives special thanks to all of its school families, staff and community for helping make this effort a huge success. This was just one program

where the children were able to "pay it forward" for others throughout the school year.



Grand Prairie students Kyle Gess and Cullen Jorgensen with packages ready for mailing to the troops.

# Our students again served as Santa's helpers

Santa's workload was a little lighter once again this year, thanks to sixth through eighth grade students and staff at Hickory Creek Middle School. Their hard work, along with generous donations from District 157-C families, granted the wishes of truly needy children.

Pre-kindergarten through fourth grade children from the Cesar E. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center in Chicago were the recipients of Hickory Creek's efforts.

This program answers letters that needy children have written to Santa and works to grant the children's wishes, with a price limit set for each gift. Hickory Creek students participate annually in conjunction with District 157-C's Character Counts character education program. Many Frankfort families overwhelmingly respond to the call, granting the wishes of students who write letters to Santa.

Hickory Creek sixth grade teacher Renee Grady coordinates the annual



Hickory Creek sixth grader Jack Marion carries packages to be loaded onto the truck for delivery to Chavez School.

effort with the sixth grade staff's help.

The project filled 650 letter requests and every sixth grader at the school had a job in making the program such a success. Whether they were preparing the letter boxes, sorting the gifts into room number,

bagging or loading the truck, student participation was a key factor in the success of the program. Every sixth grade student and teacher had a role.

As the gifts were collected, students wrapped them in holiday paper and wrote a letter back to each child as Santa's helpers. Students loaded the packages onto a large truck that the Hickory Creek custodial staff drove to the Chavez School just in time for the holidays.



Students enjoyed seeing Principal Will Seidelmann dressed as an elf to help them load the truck.



Shannon Nelson

*Staff member Shannon Nelson was recognized for 10 benchmark years of service to District 157-C in the Fall 2015 issue of our newsletter. However, her photo was inadvertently omitted from the article by the publisher. We apologize for this error.*

## KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

**Kindergarten Round Up - February 25th, 1:00-1:45 p.m., Grand Prairie Lunchroom.**  
(At this time you will have an opportunity to set up your appointment for registration.)

**March 8 - Kindergarten registration begins by appointment (Call 815-469-5922)**  
Tuesdays 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. and Thursday's 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

**April 5th - "Kindergarten, Here We Come!" 1:00 - 1:45 p.m. OR 6:15 - 7:00 p.m.**

**May 3rd - "Kindergarten, Here we Come!" 1:00 - 1:45 p.m. OR 6:15 - 7:00 p.m.**

**Kindergarten Round Up and "Kindergarten, Here We Come" allow parents and incoming Kindergarteners an opportunity to come into Grand Prairie for what might be the first time! Some of our Kindergarten teachers and staff members will be available during the presentations. The children experience activities with teachers at each event, while the parents hear pertinent information to help them prepare for next year!**

**Frankfort C.C. School District 157-C**  
Administrative Office  
10482 Nebraska Street  
Frankfort, Illinois 60423

**Telephone (815) 469-5922**  
**[www.fsd157c.org](http://www.fsd157c.org)**

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### FRANKFORT SCHOOL DISTRICT 157-C

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*The mission of District 157-C is to prepare all students to be confident, life-long learners and productive citizens by challenging them to reach their fullest potential and by providing a quality educational environment in partnership with family and community*

#### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

*February 12*  
*Teacher Institute Day, NO SCHOOL*

*February 15*  
*Presidents Holiday, NO SCHOOL*

*February 17*  
*Board of Education Meeting,*  
*Grand Prairie, 7:00 p.m.*

*March 7*  
*Casimir Pulaski Day, NO SCHOOL*

*March 8*  
*Kindergarten registration begins.*  
*Please call for appointment,*  
*815-469-5922*

*March 11*  
*Foundation Fundraising Auction,*  
*Prestwick Country Club, 7:00 p.m.*

*March 16*  
*Board of Education Meeting,*  
*Grand Prairie, 7:00 p.m.*

*March 24 Teacher Institute Day*  
*NO SCHOOL*

*March 25 - April 4*  
*Spring Break, NO SCHOOL*

## FSP hosts “Holidays Around the World”

Various languages, culture and holiday traditions from across the globe were highlighted at the District 157-C “Holidays Around the World” event.

This fourth annual free celebration was hosted by the Family School Partnership (FSP) and was a huge success. Several countries were represented by students and their families through presentations about their holiday traditions, ethnic backgrounds and culture.

These families shared a wealth of information from their respective countries that included France, Pakistan, Austria, Greece, Philippines, China, Mexico, Ireland, Poland, Germany, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Sweden and Switzerland.

Children and their parents traveled to each presentation table, enjoyed learning about the various countries and traditions and then had their passports stamped. Menus and information about several ethnic restaurants in Frankfort were also provided as a separate display.

The first 50 students in attendance from each school received a gift and all students were entered

into a raffle to win their school’s gift basket valued at more than \$100. They also enjoyed free hot



*Lisa and Barry Glancy presented Ireland information to Becky Brown and her son Blake.*

chocolate and popcorn. Pizza by Villa Rosa was available for purchase.

The Hickory Creek Middle School Choir performed for the many families in attendance. Everyone was invited to support our troops by taking a moment to write them a postcard coordinated through the Lincoln-Way High School ROTC.

Also represented were Lincoln-Way East High School, Frankfort Library, Frankfort Area Historical Society, Frankfort Park District, Language Stars, Lincoln-Way International Club/Foreign Lan-

guage and the FSP. Donations to support this event were received from the Museum of Science & Industry, Frankfort Aurelio’s, Quinlan & Fabish Publishing, Action Sports, Butter-Up, Villa Rosa, the Clark Family, the McGuire Family and the Oliver Family.

The FSP Chairperson for this program was Kris McGuire. She extended special thanks to the family members who put together the displays highlighting their countries and the volunteers who helped make the event a success.

Please join us in thanking the FSP for providing this and all of their other excellent programs.



*Representing China were Yoyo Liu, Pearl Wu, Hong Yang, April Zhou and Min Zhang.*