

BEN.25 | connect

A Benjamin School District 25
communiqué connecting schools
and the community.

Benjamin District 25 publishes **BEN.25 Connect** for parents and residents.



AUTUMN 2010

Dear Friends

With economic woes continuing throughout our state and nation, its impact on families and schools remains a significant issue.

A steady unemployment rate and dwindling state revenue creates a challenging time for all of us to function within the tight financial parameters. For instance, senior citizens must live on fixed incomes, yet they are faced with the rising costs of basic needs such as food and utilities.

These dismal economic times cannot be used as an excuse for providing inferior educational opportunities for our youth. I believe that it would be a tragedy for the public to send the message to this generation of students that it is too bad they didn't receive an excellent education because of the timing of the sluggish economy. Our future is in the hands of the students in our classrooms today.

Benjamin School District 25 remains financially sound due to the fiscal responsibility set forth by the school board and the support of our community. Our balanced budget remains in place and at the same time our students continue to achieve higher levels of excellence. Evidence of the noteworthy students' accomplishments includes:

- » At least 90 percent of students met or exceeded the 2010 ISAT reading, math and science standards in all grade levels tested;
- » 100 percent of grade 3 students met or exceeded the 2010 ISAT math standards;
- » Students achieving the 2010 Measures of Academic Progress growth targets in reading and math have increased;
- » 96 percent attendance rate; and
- » 72 percent of grades 6-8 students participated in at least one extracurricular activity.

The school district's scorecard report lists the results of the attainment of our three goals: 1) improve student achievement; 2) increase communication

about school district and with stakeholders; and, 3) ensure organizational effectiveness and fiscal stability. You may access the entire scorecard report on the district's website, www.bendist25.org. The report will be published in the winter 2010 district newsletter.

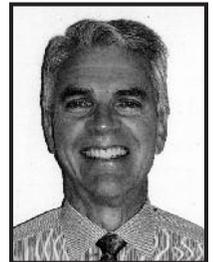
We also track the performance of other Benjamin students who are now attending Community High School. The Benjamin students consisted of 17 percent of the 2010 senior class. Specific examples of their outstanding performance are as follows:

- » 25 percent were Illinois state scholars (top 10 percent of class);
- » 25 percent were members of the National Honor Society;
- » 36 percent received highest honor (perfect 4.0 GPA); and
- » 27 percent earned academic awards.

On behalf of the students and staff, thank you for the ongoing and active community support of Benjamin School District 25 students! I wholeheartedly agree with Colin Powell's comments to students, "To look at you gives me enormous hope. You look so competent, so strong, so young, so committed, so ready to take on the future, difficult times and all."

Sincerely,

Philip M. Ehrhardt, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT



Philip Ehrhardt, Ed. D.
Superintendent

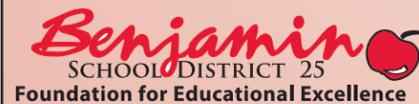
Benjamin District 25's Ben.25 Connect community newsletter was recognized this fall with a top Award of Excellence by the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association.



Did You Know?

School foundations are taking on an increasingly important role in the delivery of public education as they augment, supplement, enhance and complement programs and activities currently provided by school districts.

With the continued decrease in state and federal funding, school foundations are becoming an essential component of healthy, forward-thinking school districts. A foundation differs from a PTA in that it is formed for the sole purpose of raising funds to supplement the school district budget. The PTA is an educational and advocacy group whose funds are directed to support programs, events and services for students.



The Benjamin Foundation for Educational Excellence is a non-profit organization formed for the sole function of raising funds to support, enhance and enrich educational opportunities that go beyond normal limits of the Benjamin District 25 budget. Funds may come from grants, donations or fundraising activities.

Tax-deductible contributions which may qualify for employer matching grants also are accepted. Donations may be sent to: Treasurer, Benjamin Foundation, Benjamin District 25, Administration Service Center, 28W250 St. Charles Road, West Chicago, IL 60185.

Excitement Builds As Students Tap Into Classroom Technology

According to Wynne Schiera, Benjamin District 25 technology information coordinator, Dewey's thoughts of nearly a century ago ring just as true today as parents, teachers and students embrace the tools of today in preparing leaders of tomorrow.

Those efforts were enhanced this summer as 38 new notebook computers, 27 document cameras, 22 wireless projectors, 33 robust speakers and 28 multimedia carts were deployed in classrooms across the district. Capabilities also were enhanced to provide every classroom with wireless access.

"The district technology committee along with feedback from the district tech liaisons initially identified key components for an ideal classroom teaching/learning workstation which included laptops, wireless projectors and a document camera," Schiera reports. "This year each teacher received a multimedia cart with those components: a laptop, wireless projector, a document camera

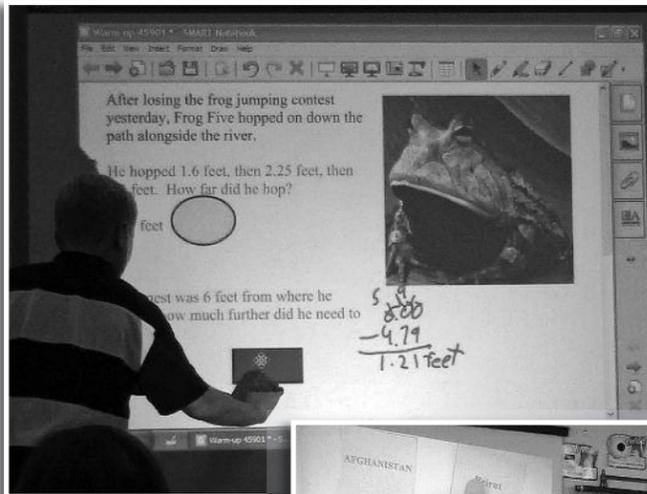
and a robust speaker system."

The district technology committee also identified a strong need for an intranet collaboration tool to enhance parent and community involvement. To meet that need, a new user-friendly and easy-to-update district website at www.bendist25.org was put in place over the summer and went live this fall.

"It empowers our team of many to update district information on the website in real time," Schiera explains. "This real-time information can be communicated to parents and community via the web. It offers future capabilities where collaboration can take place amongst staff and students via a safe and secure environment."

Other notable technology enhancements include:

A new laptop lab on the second floor at Benjamin Middle School, complete with 28 new laptops sporting the Windows 7 operating system, is in place and complemented by a new SmartBoard interactive white board with sound system, a document camera and laptop for the presenter.

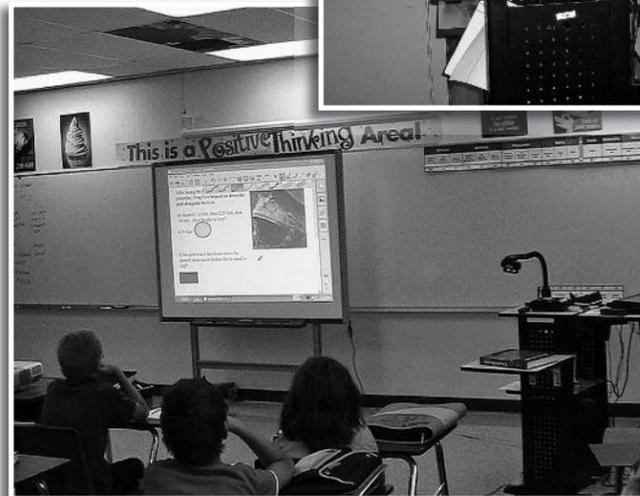


The SmartBoard interactive whiteboard helps students visualize numeric challenges and solutions in a Benjamin Middle School math class.

Christine Hudock uses a document camera in her sixth grade integrated language arts and reading class.



Classrooms across the district now are equipped with teaching/learning workstations including laptop computer, document camera, wireless projector and robust speaker systems.



Ten new laptops with the Windows 7 operating system are in place at Evergreen Elementary School, and a new SmartBoard is in use in the computer laptop lab.

Staff now are able to sign out the computer labs and several facility rooms for daytime use via e-mail.

A new Frontline wireless speaker system at

Matthew Provenzale who worked along side district technology staff members throughout the summer months checking data drops, imaging new computers, adding software, re-imaging old laptops, testing and assembling equipment.

"If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow."

John Dewey, American philosopher

School Finance 101:

Tax Cap Impacts Property Tax Levies

So just how does the Property Tax Limit Law (PTELL), known as the tax cap, affect property tax levies?

Prior to the tax cap, taxes increased as a result of rising home values due to the real estate market. The intent of the tax cap was to limit rising taxes due to escalating home values.

When the tax cap became law, the prior year's tax extension became the basis for computing the tax increase for the next year. Consequently, the money from the previous year now is used as the baseline for the next year. New growth and the Consumer Price Index for urban areas (CPI-U) are placed into a formula to calculate the new tax extension. This tax extension is the overall amount of revenue generated through property taxes for a school district. Consequently, school officials closely monitor the CPI-U since it is the most significant determinant of school budgets. The Department of Labor releases the final CPI-U for the previous calendar year in January.

The CPI-U has averaged approximately 2.2 percent for nearly 20 years, yet the CPI-U for 2008 was only 0.1 percent. As a result, Benjamin School District 25 has been implementing cost-saving measures to address the drastic drop in revenue. Budget adjustments for the 2010-2011 school year have been made without having a negative impact on the classroom. The list of cost-saving measures can be found on our website, www.bendist25.org. The district continues to search for more cost-saving measures to curb expenditures.



New Route To Bring Lake Michigan Water To Benjamin Middle School

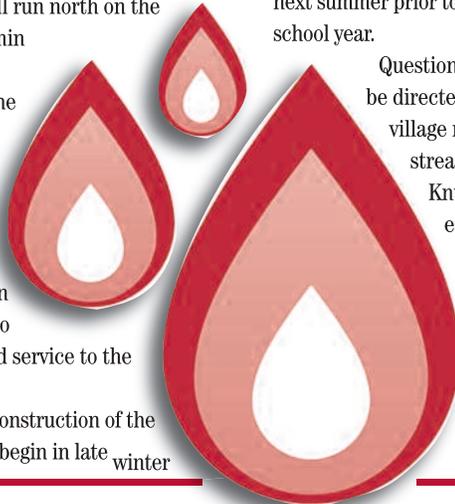
Benjamin District 25 residents were updated on the status of the water main connection project by officials from the Village of Carol Stream at an informational meeting August 17 at Benjamin Middle School.

Carol Stream Village Manager Joe Breinig and Jim Knudsen, director of engineering services, explained how the water line route design has been modified and now will run north on the eastern edge of the Benjamin Middle School property to Trieste Lane rather than the previously anticipated route along Fair Oaks Road. They explained that a dead-end line also will run in front of Benjamin Middle School on St. Charles Road in order to provide water hydrants and service to the school.

It is anticipated that construction of the water line installation will begin in late winter

or early spring. Construction is estimated to last three months. Based on the projected timeline, the project is planned to be completed by the end of next summer prior to the start of the 2011-2012 school year.

Questions concerning the project may be directed to Joe Breinig, Carol Stream village manager, at jbreinig@carol-stream.org or 630-871-6250; Jim Knudsen, Carol Stream director of engineering services, at jknudsen@carolstream.org or 630-871-6220; or, Phil Ehrhardt, Benjamin School District 25 superintendent, at pehrhardt@bendist25.org or 630-876-7800.



Make The Ben.25 Communication Connection!

Building and maintaining open lines of communication with members of our Benjamin District 25 family are key ingredients to making a difference in the lives of the children we serve. A variety of communication methods are available to share a compliment, address a question or communicate a concern to the superintendent. They include:

WRITTEN:

Send written communication to the Administration Service Center, 28W250 St. Charles Road, West Chicago, IL 60185.

PHONE:

Call 630-876-7800 to speak with Dr. Ehrhardt, or leave a voice mail message.

E-MAIL:

Use the address: pehrhardt@bendist25.org.

FAX:

Use the Benjamin District 25 fax line at 630-876-3325 to send your comments to Dr. Ehrhardt.

Mark Your Calendars!

Additional calendar dates may be found on the district website at www.bendist25.org.

Oct. 20	Early Dismissal (1:45 Benjamin; 2 p.m. preschool; 2:15 p.m. Evergreen grades K-4)	Nov. 22, 23, 24	Non-Attendance Days
Oct. 24-30	Red Ribbon Week	Nov. 25 & 26	Thanksgiving Break—No School
Nov. 8	Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., Admin. Board Room	Dec. 3	Evergreen Holiday Bazaar
Nov. 8, 10, 16, 18	Parent/Teacher Conferences Benjamin: 4:30–7:30 p.m. Evergreen: 4:30–7:30 p.m.	Dec. 13	Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., Admin. Board Room
Nov. 14-20	American Education Week	Dec. 20-31	Winter Break—No School
		Jan 3, 2011	School Resumes
		Jan. 10	Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., Admin. Board Room

Board of Education: Janice Bedard, President / Cyndy Ciolino, Vice President / John P. Conlon, Secretary / Jack Buscemi, Gregg Lemkau, Tammy Mastroianni & Dennis Peterson / Dr. Philip M. Ehrhardt, Superintendent

Please note that because Benjamin District 25 mails its publications by postal route, some individuals who do not live within Benjamin District 25 may receive this mailing.

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