

Headlines

a publication of Hillside School District 93 ♦ 4804 Harrison St. Hillside, IL 60162 ♦ (708) 449-6490

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 2 SPRING 2016

Message from the SUPERINTENDENT



Dr. KEVIN L. SUCHINSKI

Following a great 2015, this year is passing quickly. The students are very involved in many programs and projects, and we are extremely proud of their accomplishments. Please take time to review this newsletter to celebrate their successes.

We encourage you to continue to visit Hillside School during our community events. The students are eager to showcase their knowledge and skills.

We are embarking on an exciting journey: the recent development of our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan. This document is posted on our website www.hillside93.org for your review. If you have questions, or would like to join the Strategic Planning Committee, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your continued support on behalf of Hillside School children. As always, if you have questions, be sure to call the District Office at (708) 449-6490.

Dr. Kevin L. Suchinski, Superintendent

STRATEGIC PLANNING is Underway

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic Planning is a process for determining and executing an organization's plan for the future. It is driven by the vision of a cross section of Board of Education members, staff, administrators and community. The process results in a common purpose, a common sense of direction, priorities for change and a blueprint for action. The main components of a Strategic Plan include an organization's beliefs, mission, strategic goals and action plans. Built into every plan are an annual review and a 12-month benchmark for progress.

Hillside School District 93 has embarked on a process to create a Strategic Plan that will define and set district goals for the next five years. At a workshop during its November 2015 meeting, the Board of Education identified five core areas of focus:

- ✓ Instruction/programming
- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Human Resources
- ✓ Community Engagement
- ✓ Facilities

On February 5 and 6, a Strategic Planning Committee consisting of all district representatives – Board members, administrators, teachers, parents and community members – met for two strategic planning work sessions. Dr. Robert Madonia, an experienced educator and former school superintendent, who has facilitated the

groups. The challenge for each group was to determine five goals based upon an assigned focus area. The groups then identified the goals through a collaborative effort and a consensus approach that included discussion and feedback. From there, the groups identified the top two goals in each of the five areas. The remaining goals will be kept and implemented after the first two goals in each area are achieved.



CYNTHIA WAGNER, HILLSIDE SCHOOL'S DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT, PROVIDED INPUT.

"The strategic planning work sessions were phenomenal," stated Cynthia Wagner, director of curriculum and assessment. "It was the first time we had representative community involvement in the district's strategic planning process. The level of conversation was deep, informative, and very positive. It also validated that much of what we are doing at Hillside School is on the right track – that we, as educators, are moving in a very positive direction."



DISTRICT STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATED IN THE RECENT STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSIONS.

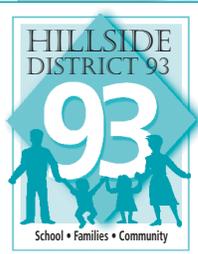
The Board of Education reviewed the Strategic Planning Committee's recommendations at its February Board meeting. The administration then developed action plans for each goal, which were presented and reviewed at the March 9 Board of Education meeting, where the board members voted to approve the Strategic Plan.

The Hillside District 93 Strategic Plan was shared with the committee members and is now available for the community on the district website, www.hillside93.org. Printed copies are also available for the public.

The Strategic Plan will set the direction for improvement and growth for the years 2016-2021. [CONTINUES ON PAGE 3](#)

strategic planning process for other school districts, led the sessions. Prior to the meeting, the district implemented a survey to solicit input from all District 93 stakeholders on the five focus areas. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee received a summary of the survey results to help explore topics.

During the two-day session, forty participants worked in five collaborative



DR. KEVIN L. SUCHINSKI, SUPERINTENDENT

STEVEN BOGREN, PRINCIPAL

JENNIFER MCGUIRE, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

CYNTHIA WAGNER, DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM

SARAH JOHNSON-MILLON, BUSINESS MANAGER

GEOGRAPHY KNOWLEDGE is Tested

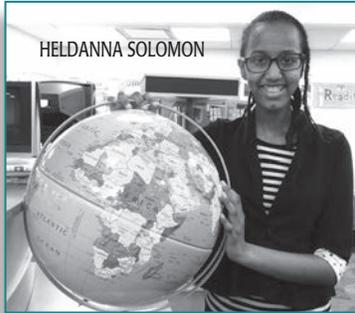
Each year, Hillside School students participate in the National Geographic Society's geography contest: the GEOBEE. The contest, for grades four through eight, is designed to spark interest in geography, increase public awareness of geography, and encourage teachers to include the subject in their classrooms.

The format of the contest is similar to a spelling bee. In each round, students who answer questions correctly move to the next round.

In January, seventh grade student **Heldanna Solomon** won the GEOBEE when she correctly answered the question,

"National Geographic Explorer Zeb Hogan studies the world's largest freshwater fish. One such fish, the white sturgeon, lives in North America and can grow to 20 feet long. This fish can be found in the Fraser River in British Columbia in which country?"

(The answer appears at the end of this article.)



Perhaps it's no wonder that Heldanna is good at geography. Although born in the U.S., her family is from Ethiopia. She is a straight-A student who enjoys geography. Her favorite subjects are reading and math. She is active in many extra-curricular activities. Heldanna has one sibling, her younger sister Edidya. Both have attended Hillside School since kindergarten.

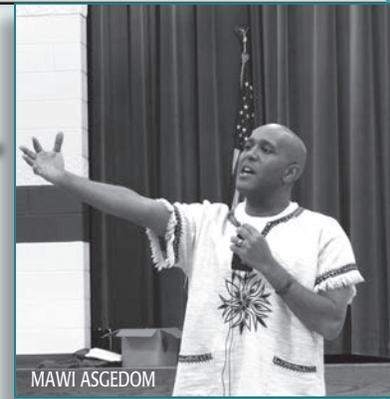
Heldanna also likes to write and draw. She aspires to be an author, focusing on fiction. She has set her sights on attending the Proviso Math and Science Academy.

Congratulations to Heldanna and to her parents, Solomon Gurmu and Bezawork Gebre.

Answer: Canada

MAWI LEARNING TAKES OFF

Mawi Asgedom is an internationally known award-winning educator and author who shared his vision called *Mawi Learning* with Hillside School teachers at the beginning of the school year. Its objective is to increase the academic and life opportunities of youth through character, social and emotional, and leadership training. Hillside teachers engaged in professional development to learn how to infuse Mawi Learning into the classroom.



On January 25, Mr. Asgedom returned to Hillside School to present a school-wide kick-off assembly, where he engaged and energized students with his positive message.

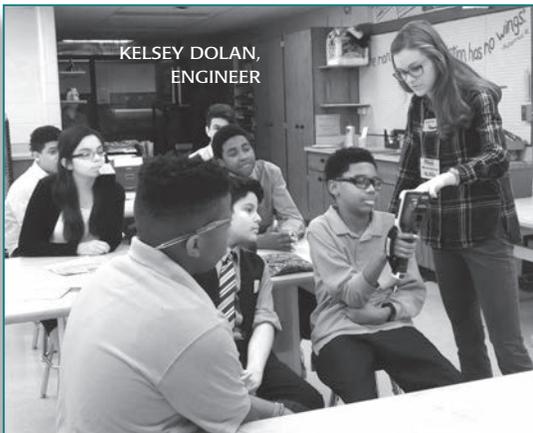
Students are now focusing on the "growth mindset," and using their "turbo button," an internal way of reaching down deep to display the will to grow, and to show perseverance.

This is what Mawi Learning looks like throughout the grades: Kindergarten- through fourth-grade students are learning the growth mindset and using their turbo buttons.

Fifth- and sixth-grade students are engaging in "mental karate," in which students earn "belts" (wristbands) as they complete units on Initiative, Contribution, Discipline, Courage and Awareness.

Seventh-grade students are focusing on Critical Thinking and Study Skills, while eighth-grade students are developing Leadership Skills.

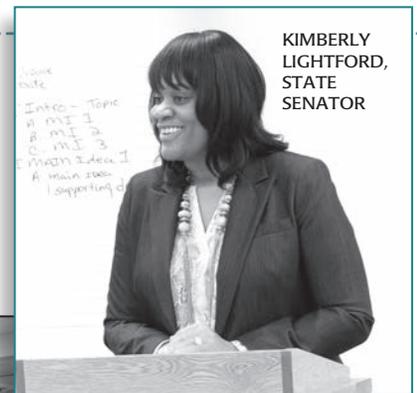
All students are learning that positive attitudes, goal setting, hard work, and perseverance will help them meet with success.



SEVENTH- AND EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN THE SCHOOL'S CAREER DAY ON FEBRUARY 9. THIS IMPORTANT HILLSIDE SCHOOL TRADITION BEGAN 12 YEARS AGO AND TAKES PLACE EVERY OTHER YEAR WITH THE GOAL OF HELPING STUDENTS PLAN FOR COLLEGE AND WORK. PROFESSIONALS FROM DIVERSE OCCUPATIONS SPOKE TO THE STUDENTS ABOUT CAREERS, EDUCATION AND HOW TO SUCCEED IN THEIR FIELDS.

THE STUDENTS ENJOYED

PRESENTATIONS FROM: STATE TROOPER MARCUS NETTLES (KEYNOTE SPEAKER); FIREFIGHTER DAVID BUIE; DENNIS CHA, FRANCHISE OWNER; STATE TROOPER TERRANCE CRUMP; KELSEY DOLAN, ENGINEER; JEREMY DUFFY, ATTORNEY; BRANDON IVY, COSMETOLOGY; KIMBERLY LIGHTFORD, STATE SENATOR); CHRIS RYMUT, COAST GUARD; BRANDON THOMPSON, SOFTWARE MARKETING; AND POLICE OFFICER CHRISTOPHER VILLARREAL.



STRATEGIC PLANNING is Underway continues from p. 1

From the Board President

The Hillside School Board of Education has a responsibility to its key stakeholders (students, parents, staff and the community). Hosting strategic planning stakeholder workshops (focus groups) in early February exemplifies a commitment to our obligations. We were fortunate to have many people attend, and from this gained quality input. Many participants engaged in deep discussion, and their passion for providing for our students, community, staff and school was evident in all of our conversations.

The implementation of a Strategic Plan will be a vital tool in the progression of Hillside School. Everyone will work toward meeting the same goals. This plan aligns with our vision and strengthens our commitment to Hillside School. I have enjoyed this collaborative experience, meeting new people, and building relationships. I am very excited to be a part of this process and I am looking forward to the growth of Hillside School.

President Jennifer Owens, District 93 Board of Education

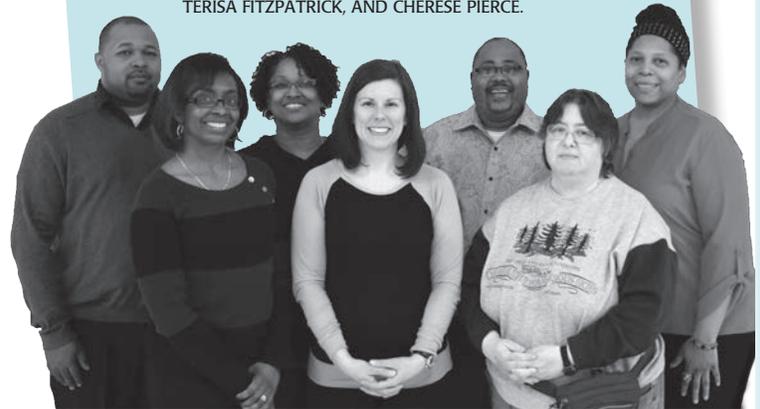
In Appreciation: Board Members

Members of the District 93 Board of Education work tirelessly and without pay. Their decisions are crucial to the district's success. Board members are an integral part of the strategic planning process. The entire Hillside School community extends its appreciation to the District 93 Board of Education members

(who are listed below with their length of service), for their important efforts on behalf of students and parents:

Jennifer Owens, president – five years, Karen Slater, vice president – five years, Deborah Johnson, secretary – two years, Cherese Pierce – fourteen years, Terisa Fitzpatrick – five years, Kenneth Holland – six months, and Daryl Richardson – eight months.

HILLSIDE SCHOOL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS
(L TO R): DARYL RICHARDSON, DEBORAH JOHNSON,
KAREN SLATER, JENNIFER OWENS, KENNETH HOLLAND,
TERISA FITZPATRICK, AND CHERESE PIERCE.



Supporting the COMMON CORE

Exploring New Learning Resources

During the 2014-2015 school year, Illinois schools began full implementation of the new Common Core academic standards, a process that took several years to accomplish. The standards establish clear, consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English language arts in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Learning is research- and evidenced-based, rigorous, and designed to help students succeed in the global workplace. Common Core marks a quantum shift from formulaic learning to inquiry-based learning.

Hillside School educators are exploring new math classroom resources that will aid Common Core alignment. These resources will further student engagement, promote critical thinking skills, and help students learn there is more than one way to solve a problem.

Members of the West Cook Math Initiative (WCMI), who work with school districts to improve algebra preparation and the teaching of algebra, aided Hillside educators in the resource

selection process. The University of Illinois, Chicago, administers WCMI.

Teacher teams and the school's curriculum director reviewed two math resources for grades K-5, and two others for grades 6-8. Teachers are currently piloting the resources in class. After piloting the resources, the teachers at each grade level will evaluate the effectiveness of each of the resources.

Based upon input from the staff and administration, a recommendation to purchase new math resources (K-8) will be made to the Board of Education in the spring. Upon approval from the Board of Education, teachers will then receive professional development in the spring and during the summer. The new math resources will be introduced in classrooms at the start of the next school year.

Assessing the Common Core

The Common Core gives benchmarks for achievement for every grade, and asks "what do students want to know at the end of the year?" and, "are students mastering the Common Core standards?"

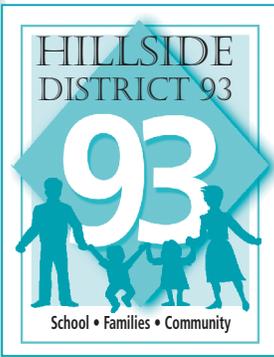
Hillside teachers are beginning to use the web-based assessment tool *Illuminate* to

create assessments for students that measure student progress, and to collect data from those assessments that will help drive instruction. Illuminate also provides teachers with research materials to help them develop assessments, use data, and find learning resources to support specific standards.

One component of Illuminate is multi-step online assessments for students. Unlike multiple-choice assessments, students must use critical thinking skills to solve the problems. Every child will eventually participate in this testing.

Teachers will ultimately develop common assessments for each grade level, using the results of their data as a guide.

Currently, one teacher from each grade level, grades K-6, and two reps from junior high, are being trained to use Illuminate. They will train teacher teams, and work together to develop assessments. The district will use Illuminate to help assure that students are getting the education they need to master the Common Core learning standards.



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SPRING 2016

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STEM NIGHT

On October 22, students and their families came to the school to participate in the second annual STEM Night. STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. The evening's theme was "It's All About Time."

Students and families visited different workstations, each with a fun and educational hands-on challenge related to a STEM category, and to the concept of time. They enjoyed these challenges and others:

The "marble race" measured time and distance (math). In "Planetary Orbit" students discovered the relationship between time and planetary orbits (science). In "Time Museum," they learned how technology continues to evolve and improve. They also built sundials, water clocks, and sand clocks (engineering).

STEM Night is one way that students are applying their critical thinking skills, and also learning about the importance of STEM in life.



FAMILY MEMBERS WORKED TOGETHER ON ACTIVITIES DURING STEM NIGHT.

Students Participate in CivicAction

Two Hillside School junior high students, **Alex Ayala** and **Antonae Glen**, were selected by their teachers to participate in a program that introduces students to contemporary social issues facing urban communities, and promotes leadership and civic engagement among promising youth.

CivicAction, held on November 6, is a program hosted by Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development in partnership with the West Suburban Consortium for Academic Excellence, of which Hillside School is a member. CivicAction gives students the opportunity to participate in a unique service-learning immersion experience in the heart of Chicago. The consortium sent over 90 seventh- and eighth-grade students to the event this year.

Directed by the Civic Education Project, the students spent two days engaged in meaningful service and meetings with community leaders at nonprofit organizations throughout the city, along with hands-on learning, reflection, and team building.

Congratulations to Alex and Antonae!