

BEN.25 | connect

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

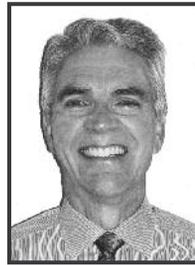
Benjamin District 25 publishes **BEN.25 Connect** for parents and residents.



SUMMER 2014

Dear Friends,

"Technology is supposed to make our lives easier, allowing us to do things more quickly and efficiently. But too often it seems to make things harder, leaving us with 50-button remote controls, digital cameras with hundreds of mysterious features and book-length manuals, and cars with dashboard systems worthy of the space shuttle." *James Surowiecki*



Philip Ehrhardt, Ed. D.
Superintendent

approved by the school board in May 2014 and includes the strategies to be implemented to achieve the three goals of: improving student achievement for all students, expanding communication with stakeholders, and ensuring fiscal stability and organizational efficiency.

Strategic Directions 2014-2019 is publicized in a variety of ways. The plan is available at the Administration Service Center and our schools. It also is posted on the school district's website, www.bendist25.org.

A recent poll taken this spring during Distracted Driving Awareness month revealed that many drivers are struggling with all the technology found in many cars. Respondents indicated they do not want social media to entertain them while driving and instead, they desire access to technologies to increase safety which include on-board radar and sensor tools such as blind spot warnings, lane-departure sensing, and systems that automatically respond to the environment.

The purpose of our schools' Technology Integration Enhancement initiative is to effectively use technology in the classroom to enhance student engagement and motivation that helps students learn and apply knowledge more readily. Due to our careful planning and professional development, technology will not be a distraction or just a source of entertainment.

The first district technology summer academy was a week-long event covering 13 different topics and was attended by 83 teachers, teacher assistants and substitute teachers. The sessions covered many of the new applications that we will be using this school year, such as Canvas (a learning management system), iCurio (content management system), TenMarks (a math program), and Waterford (an early literacy program). Also introduced was some of the new hardware that will be installed in the classrooms this summer, such as the Epson interactive projectors and iPads for the preschool through second grades. But more importantly, staff was trained on how to integrate these new resources into the classrooms, and allowed time to start creating and modifying lessons to incorporate this new knowledge. This year will provide many opportunities to continue to provide professional

development activities.

Parents and their students also will attend orientation sessions to receive training on the proper use of computers, the Internet, and safeguards in place to block student access to inappropriate sites.

Technology classes will be offered to parents and community members who would like to learn more about the uses of technology that will benefit them. These classes will be taught by some of our students, staff, and other experts. An offering of the classes will be publicized in the fall to invite parents and residents to participate at no charge.

2014-2015 Tentative Budget

The tentative budget for next year was presented at the June 16 school board meeting. Operating fund revenues are increasing by 2.9 percent, excluding the Debt Service Fund. Operating expenditures are projected to increase by 4.1 percent which does not take into account cost-savings measures. Already we have implemented some measures to reduce our planned increased expenditures from \$174,000 to \$104,000.

The tentative budget is posted on our website and is available for review at the Administration Service Center. A public hearing will be held at the September 8 school board meeting to provide an opportunity for Benjamin School District 25 residents to comment on the budget. The school board will then adopt the final budget.

Strategic Directions 2014-2019

The extensive planning reflected in the updated Strategic Directions 2014-2019 defines the core work of the school district for the next five years. It was

Preparation for Start of School

High quality staff members have been hired along with staff being trained in using technology in conjunction with students. Also, teachers have worked together this summer to further align our mathematics and language arts curriculums with the Common Core Standards. The new computers for students in grades 3-8 have been set up for their use and clusters of iPads and interactive whiteboards have been installed in preK-2 classrooms.

The buildings have been thoroughly cleaned and facility improvements have been completed. These improvements include: pavement patching and sealcoating, removal of the mobile classrooms at Evergreen Elementary School, security and safety enhancements, septic system improvements at Benjamin Middle School, and installation of energy efficient exterior lighting.

Benjamin School District 25 takes pride in meeting the learning needs of all students. The scope of our educational programs provides many curricular and extracurricular opportunities to enable our students to be academically well-rounded. Our talented and dedicated faculty, hard-working students, and supportive parents and community are the critical components that enable students to maximize their potential. I am honored to serve as the superintendent of such of an outstanding school district as we launch another exciting school year!

Sincerely,

Philip M. Ehrhardt, Ed.D.
Superintendent

SCHOOL FINANCE 101

Grants are an important part of today's educational funding, providing monies and resources not available in the district budget.

"Given the state's financial crisis, all Illinois public school districts have experienced a reduction and/or a delay in receiving state funds," states Shelly Clark, Ed.D., district business manager, who notes that over the past five years, Benjamin School District 25 has lost an accumulative \$1.45 million in state funds.

Occasionally, various types of special opportunity grants have become available to help support the district and financially offset some of this lost revenue.

Benjamin School District 25 has been fortunate to receive eight special opportunity grants this year, each requiring an application process and extensive reporting:

- 1) State Maintenance Grant - \$43,750:** The funds will be used to repair and replace the front roof area at Benjamin Middle School. The work is projected to take place during the summer of 2015. The expected cost is approximately \$95,000.
- 2) Illinois Emergency Maintenance Agency Security Grant - \$35,073:** These monies will provide security upgrades at both Benjamin and Evergreen Schools. There will be metal door upgrades and a few door relocations at Evergreen School in addition to fire alarm improvements for enhanced security. Both school buildings will have shatter resistant film placed on a variety of doors and windows to reduce unauthorized quick access to the buildings.
- 3) Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Development - \$15,960:** This Illinois Energy Now special opportunity grant will enable the district to upgrade the HVAC system.
- 4) Illinois Energy Community Foundation Grant - \$4,056:** These grant funds will be used to replace exterior lighting around both school buildings with fixtures that have improved energy efficiency. Replacement of the exterior lighting for both buildings will be completed during the 2014-15 school year. The new energy efficient lighting is estimated to reduce district electricity costs by \$2,350 a year. This Foundation provides financial support to Illinois nonprofits, schools, municipalities, and other local and state government agencies to improve energy efficiency, advance the development of renewable energy resources, and protect the state's natural areas.
- 5) Illinois Department of Natural Resources - \$1,574:** The grant funds are used for transporting sixth grade students to Loreda-Taft for the three-day outdoor education program. Substitute teacher costs also are covered by the grant.
- 6) Junior League of Kane and DuPage Counties - \$1,000:** Simple machine LEGO kits for the sixth grade Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) program were purchased by the grant.
- 7) LEGO Local Initiative Grant - \$1,000:** This grant provided a sixth grade on-site field trip regarding renewable energy, focusing on various types of energy sources including renewable and non-renewable options. Discussion topics of wind, force, power, electricity, old style windmills vs. new technologies were reinforced when students built their very own Vertical Axis Wind Turbine.
- 8) National PTA - \$1,000:** The funds were awarded to the Benjamin-Evergreen PTA in support of their Take Your Family To School activities, and donated to the district to acquire Lexia Learning reading software for Evergreen School students.

Since 2006, the school district has received 42 grants totaling \$169,452.

Where Are They Now?

Benjamin District 25 Spotlight On Jason Paton

Jason Paton currently is a consultant in a two-year post-MBA development program for Liberty Mutual Insurance. He graduated from Benjamin Middle School (1996), St. Charles High School (2000), earned his bachelor's degree in Economics from Vanderbilt University (2004); and his master's degree in Business Administration from Duke University (2012).



Jason Paton



Family Ties: Laura (wife), James (dad), Robin (mother and a registered nurse who previously worked at Benjamin Middle School), and Karen (sister). Extended family includes Cindy Kusswurm (aunt), a first grade teacher at Evergreen School.

Career Highlights: I currently work on various strategic and general management initiatives. These projects span across many diverse roles and geographies, including Boston, Denver and Madrid where I'm working on a project geared towards re-defining Liberty's customer segments in Spain and the tactics that are used to communicate with those segments. For instance, I help lead marketing efforts geared towards families rather than individual policyholders, and design initiatives aimed at forming deeper emotional bonds with customers in the Spanish market to increase loyalty. This fall I'll return to Chicago to assume a full role in Liberty's Midwest Region of Commercial Insurance.

Prior to business school I was a traveling strategy consultant for a large company, and I had projects for diverse clients all over the country—from large banks to the United Nations. While the job was fulfilling and exciting, heavy travel demands (often flying out to a client early Monday morning and not returning home until Friday night) and workloads made me want to transition to a career that would allow me to attain a more "normal" lifestyle, and live in house rather than a hotel! I also worked previously at a small start-up company in Nashville.

Favorite Benjamin District 25 Memory: Outdoor education was a great chance to travel away from home for a few days and have fun in the woods with my classmates. I still remember doing a skit where I volunteered for the role of "JC Penney," whose only costume was a towel.

Favorite activities: Eighth grade lock-in, seventh and eighth grade boys' basketball, fifth grade "rocket day," and classmates chanting "Volvo! Volvo!" each morning in seventh and eighth grades when my mom dropped me off in her gold station wagon.

Favorite Teachers: Matt Bohrer, Alexa Martin, and Rebecca Brooks

How District 25 helped prepare me for the future? My experience helped develop my academic, artistic and athletic talents and interests. At Benjamin I was able to develop abilities to solve problems, be accountable for my responsibilities, and work well with others. In general, I feel that one's middle school experience happens during a very important and transitory time in life—with one moving from childhood to adolescence and with it the need to evolve from being purely a concrete thinker to that of an abstract thinker, cognizant of the "greys" in the world. I appreciate that in these critical middle school years I was able to be in a place that offered smaller class sizes and dedicated teachers that really cared about us. The smaller school—80 students in my graduating class—provided a level of comfort with faculty and students, and I know that individual attention helped me to develop my learning abilities, self-confidence and intellectual curiosity.

In this feature, we take a look at one of the many shining stars for whom Benjamin District 25 provided a solid educational foundation and helped lay the roots for blossoming careers.

Outstanding High School Achievement For Benjamin 25 Grads

Benjamin School District 25 graduates continue to excel in high school, as evidenced by awards garnered at Community High School's June 5 Honors Night presentation.

While Benjamin students comprise only 16 percent of total student enrollment at the West Chicago high school, their outstanding scholastic, leadership and civic involvement shine even brighter. Congratulations to our Benjamin District 25 grads for their outstanding high school accomplishments!

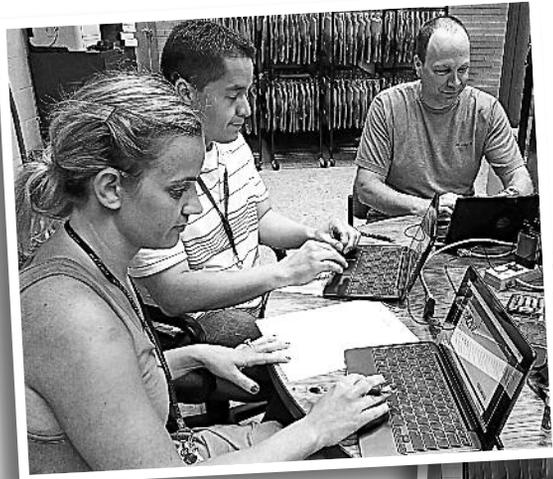
Did you know former Benjamin District 25 students tallied:

- 41 percent of awards for Highest Academic Distinction with a GPA of 5.0 or higher (17 Benjamin students out of 41 total students);

- 27 percent of awards for Academic Distinction with a GPA of 4.75 – 4.99 (11 Benjamin students out of 41 total students);
- 40 percent of awards to be named Illinois State Scholars scoring in 95th percentile on the ACT or Prairie State Achievement Exam (17 Benjamin students out of 43 total students); and
- 46 percent of the National Honor Society membership recognizing academics, leadership, service, and character (21 Benjamin students out of 46 total students).

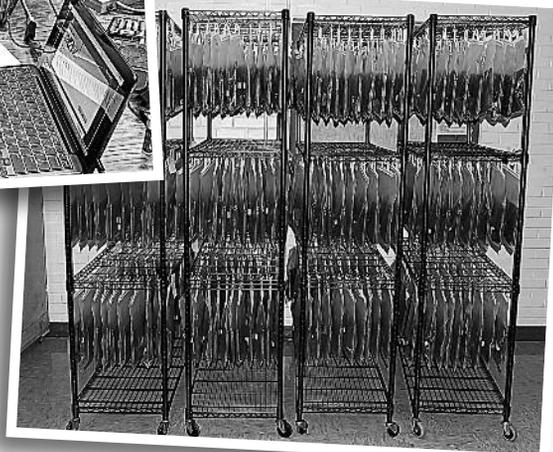


New Technology On Campus



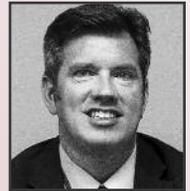
➤ Lauren Sarno, Martin Medrano and Greg Martin of the technology department image the tablets in preparation for distribution to students.

This summer the technology crew unboxed, labeled and bagged the computer tablets in preparation for our students. In early August, special parent/student orientations will be held to acquaint students in grades 4-8 and their parents with the rules, policies, Internet safety and care of the devices. At that time, students will receive their tablets along with a special backpack. ↙



Warm Welcome to New Benjamin Principal

A warm welcome to **Michael Fitzgerald**, who takes the helm as principal at Benjamin Middle School this fall. Fitzgerald replaces Joe Salmieri, who resigned to accept a superintendent position in Laraway School District 70-C.



The newly named Benjamin principal served since 2006 as principal at Eisenhower Junior High in Darien School District 61. In addition he also was the assistant principal for four years and taught five years in the same school. During his time as principal, he served the district's gifted coordinator and the new teacher mentor program coordinator. He is completing his Doctorate Degree in Educational Administration in the field of gifted education at Northern Illinois University.

In addition to serving as Benjamin principal, he will coordinate district initiatives such as assessment, advanced learning, and new teacher mentor programs.

"Mr. Fitzgerald's experience, expertise and passion will enable him to lead the school to achieve higher levels of excellence," points out Phillip Ehrhardt, Ed.D., superintendent.

Board President Anna Taylor added, "We are pleased that 40 candidates applied for the position. Mr. Fitzgerald exhibits outstanding leadership skills to continue the progress in education that is being made in Benjamin Middle School."

Summertime Reading Adventures

Books can be a window to the world full of adventure, excitement, and curiosity. This summer, incoming Evergreen School first and second grade students chose books from the 2015 Monarch Award list and incoming third and fourth grade students from the 2015 Bluestem Award list for a special summer reading program. Also available were electronic TumbleBooks and BookFlix.

Minutes read were recorded by students' parent/guardian on a summer reading log with the goal of reading 300 minutes. A special fall celebration is planned for those reaching their goal.



Rave Reviews For Evergreen LMC Summer Hours



Parents were invited to accompany their students to the Evergreen library media center on certain dates over the summer for students to enjoy stories read by guest readers, use computers to take Accelerated Reader tests, or to work on the web-based IXL math practice site for students in preschool through eighth grade. Following each visit, students received a punch card which qualified them for raffles featuring gift cards and a Kindle.



Kindergarten Registration

Kindergarten registration is ongoing at Evergreen Elementary School. For the 2014-2015 school year, students will be attending all day. To be eligible to attend kindergarten in the fall, a child must be five years old on or before Sept. 1. Parents are asked to bring their child's original county birth certificate, parent work phone numbers, emergency contact home numbers and doctor's phone number with them to register.

The forms for child health, eye and dental examinations for kindergarten must be completed and returned to the Evergreen School office or to the Benjamin District 25 Administration Service Center by Aug. 1. Forms are available on the district's website at www.bendist25.org or packets are available at the District 25 Administration Service Center.

All documents must show proper address. For registration information, call 630-876-7800.

Ben.25 Connect Now Accepting Advertising

The Benjamin District 25 now is accepting limited advertising for its award-winning community newsletter, **Ben.25 Connect**, which is mailed to 4,500 homes in West Chicago and Carol Stream four times each year.

Annual sponsorship, which helps to support increased communication with all District 25 parents, community members and business owners, will be accepted from businesses appropriate to the mission of the school district.

For advertising information, contact Phillip Ehrhardt, Ed.D., superintendent, at the Benjamin District 25 Administration Service Center at 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.

Benjamin District 25's **Ben.25 Connect** community newsletter was recognized in 2010 and 2012 with a top Award of Excellence by the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association.



[facebook.com/BenjaminDistrict25](https://www.facebook.com/BenjaminDistrict25)

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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Superintendent:
Dr. Philip M. Ehrhardt

Mark Your Calendars

Aug. 15

Class lists posted, 2 p.m. on website at www.bendist25.org; 3 p.m. Benjamin gym windows

Aug. 25

First Day for staff, Institute Day
Grades 1-4 Teacher Meet & Greet, 2-3 p.m. Evergreen School

Aug. 26

First Day of school
Benjamin Picture Day
Dismissal: 11:10 a.m., Benjamin;
11:40 a.m., Evergreen

Aug. 27

Kindergarten Orientation & Preschool Supply Drop Off

Sept. 1

Labor Day, no school

Sept. 2

First Day of preschool

Sept. 2 & 3

Benjamin-Evergreen PTA book fair, Benjamin Middle School

Sept. 3

Curriculum Night, 6:30 p.m. grades 5-8, Benjamin Middle School

Sept. 4

Back to School Night, preschool, grades K-2, Evergreen School

Sept. 8

Board of Education meeting, 7 p.m. Administration board room

Sept. 11

Back to School Night, grades 3-4, Evergreen School

Sept. 16

PTA meeting, 7:30 p.m., Administration board room

Sept. 18

Evergreen Picture Day

Sept. 26

PTA Open Gym Night, 6:30-8 p.m., Evergreen School

Oct. 7

Stay & Play for two-year-olds, 10-11 a.m., Evergreen School

Oct. 10

Institute Day, no school

Oct. 13

Columbus Day, no school

Oct. 14

Board of Education meeting, 7 p.m. Administration board room

Oct. 19

Benjamin Foundation for Educational Excellence Fall Festival, 12-4 p.m. Evergreen School

Oct. 31

5th & 6th Grade Talent Show, 1 p.m., Benjamin large gym

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

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