

BEN.25 | connect

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

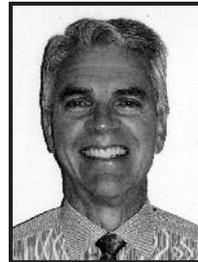
Benjamin District 25 publishes **BEN.25 Connect** for parents and residents.



AUTUMN 2011

Dear Friends,

**There is an ancient Chinese curse that says,
"May you live in interesting times."**



Philip Ehrhardt, Ed. D.
Superintendent

We indeed live in interesting times at the local, state, national and global levels. The challenges facing us are complex and ever changing. For instance, who would have imagined such an erratic stock market in the United States, which is affected by issues occurring worldwide?

Controlling spending and maximizing revenue are strategies that have enabled Benjamin School District 25 to maintain its healthy financial condition. These strategies allow the school board and administration to allocate as many funds as possible to support teaching and learning. I invite you to review the cost-savings measures that have been implemented by visiting our website and clicking under the District-Finance menus. Three podcasts that I have created regarding financial information can also be accessed on our website.

Personnel expenses comprise approximately 80 percent of a school district's budget, including Benjamin District 25's budget. This year, we reduced an additional administrator which has resulted in a decrease of two administrators in the past three years. Consequently, there are three full-time administrative positions (two principals and the superintendent) remaining. In addition, the part-time business manager's work days have been cut from 120 to 80 days per year with no fringe benefits. We are fortunate to have hired an outstanding

business manager, Dr. Shelley Clark, who fills the vacancy of Dr. Bernie Madden following his retirement. An introduction of Dr. Clark is provided in a separate article in this newsletter.

Each teaching and support staff vacancy is analyzed to determine if the position needs to be filled. Due to a declining enrollment, six teaching vacancies have not been replaced in the last three years. Our average class size has only increased to 20 students for grades K-2, and 22 students for grades 3-8. At winter break, one healthcare assistant vacancy resulting from a retirement will not be filled. By adjusting schedules, we will continue to have one nurse and one healthcare assistant on duty in the school district.

Our teaching, administrative and support services have not been adversely affected by the cost savings that have been realized. Our staff is working harder to offset the staffing reductions. You will note in other articles in this newsletter that our students are being academically successful based on ISAT scores and the SchoolSearch™ 2011 Bright A+™

Award for Academic Excellence in Education. The 2011-2012 District Scorecard Preliminary Report indicates that student and staff attendance rates are over 96 percent, and 85 percent of our students in grades 6-8 are involved in extracurricular activities. The 2011-2012 District Scorecard Report results will be included in the winter Ben.25 Connect community newsletter.

I welcome your comments and suggestions about our school district's academic and financial performance. Feel free to contact me by phone at 630-876-7800 or by e-mail at pehrhardt@bendist25.org. By working together, I am confident that we will continue to achieve higher levels of excellence in these interesting and challenging times!

Sincerely,
Philip M. Ehrhardt, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT

SCHOOL DAYS



Students in Bill Wadman's eighth grade integrated language arts and reading (ILAR) class learn to identify the complete and simple subjects and predicates in a sentence.

Let Freedom Ring

Congratulations to Benjamin Middle School students **Ryan Hancock and Jake Ullman** whose essays were selected to be read at special September 11 commemoration ceremonies this fall at West Chicago's Reed-Keppler Park.

Hancock and Ullman were among scores of students participating in a special essay contest sponsored by the City of West Chicago. Their entries, focusing on the theme "What Freedom Means To Me," are on display at the West Chicago City Museum or may be viewed online at www.bendist25.org.



Donna Pope's first grade students discover the elements—characters, setting, problems, and solutions—of what makes a good story as they continue to enhance their reading skills.

Thanks to a grant from the Benjamin-Evergreen PTA, Musician Michael Miles provides lessons that engage students in learning the fundamental skills of playing the guitar in Melissa LaMantia's music classes.



Benjamin Students Excel On ISAT Test

Benjamin District 25 students continue to perform well academically, as reported on the 2011 Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). The statewide test measures student achievement relating to the Illinois learning standards, developed by curriculum experts and teachers in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education.

Results are reported by subject according to four performance levels: exceeds standards, meets standards, below standards, and academic warning. The first chart indicates "exceeds or meets standards" for District 25 grades three through eight in reading and math, and for grades four and seven in science.

2006 – 2011 ISAT Results

Year	Subject	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
2006	Reading	89	89	93	93	93	95
	Math	98	96	92	92	94	92
	Science		96			99	
	Writing						
2007	Reading	84	91	89	96	87	94
	Math	96	97	95	97	92	97
	Science		96			93	
	Writing			63			65
2008	Reading	91.8	93.3	93.9	96.1	92.5	92.1
	Math	98.8	95.6	90.9	96.2	92.7	95.6
	Science		84.4			93.6	
	Writing			65	93		73
2009	Reading	89	96.4	84.5	99	92.5	98.1
	Math	96.4	98.8	86.6	92.9	94.3	96.3
	Science		97.6			98.1	
	Writing	96.3		62.9	99		81.3
2010	Reading	96.7	91.7	94	97.8	95.9	97.2
	Math	100	94	97.6	95.7	91.8	97.2
	Science		92.9			98	
	Writing	85.2		86.9	88.2		85.8
2011	Reading	89	95.7	93.9	98.9	87.2	98.9
	Math	97.2	98.9	90.2	98.9	90.4	97.9
	Science		97.8			89.4	
	Writing						

"It's important to point out that our students are learning at a high level, based on recent test results," says Philip Ehrhardt, Ed.D., district superintendent.

Another academic emphasis is how well district students do in the "exceeds standards" category (refer to second chart).

"I am pleased that we had more than 45 percent of our students in this highest category in four out of the six grade levels that were tested," says Dr. Ehrhardt, who notes that this significant accomplishment shows that district students are achieving at higher levels of excellence."

Dr. Ehrhardt adds that "we strive to further increase the number of students scoring in the 'exceeds standards' category."

2011 ISAT Exceeds %

Year	Subject	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
2006	Reading	25	54	48	43	26	17
	Math	57	38	32	39	32	37
2007	Reading	30	28	41	49	25	16
	Math	50	24	33	44	45	54
2008	Reading	48	29	41	47	33	16
	Math	69	40	19	24	44	52
2009	Reading	42	52	33	49	31	22
	Math	67	39	20	27	41	51
2010	Reading	48	50	52	40	22	20
	Math	69	49	32	44	25	50
2011	Reading	45	63	49	60	25	3
	Math	66	53	45	61	42	44



Warm Welcome To New Business Manager

A warm welcome to Shelley Clark, Ed.D., who joined the Benjamin District 25 team this summer, replacing Dr. Bernie Madden as district business manager.



Dr. Shelley Clark
Business Manager

Dr. Clark, who says she looks forward to getting to know the community and DuPage County after many years working in suburban Cook and Lake Counties, retired in June after 17 years with Winnetka School District 36. Previous experience includes serving as chief financial officer in Gurnee School District 56 and business manager for Mundelein Schools.

"Benjamin District 25 is a well-run, financially sound district with a supportive school board, talented administrators and extremely dedicated staff members," says Dr. Clark, who says she is most impressed by the commitment to children and education.

Professionally she is a member of the Illinois Association for School Business Officials, served as president of the organization 1997-1998, and was honored with their Distinguished Service Award in 2011. She received her doctorate degree from Loyola University in 2003 and completed her undergraduate degree at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

A resident of Mundelein, Dr. Clark is the mother of 27-year-old twin sons, and a daughter, 25. She is an avid cyclist and runner, having completed numerous marathons, half-marathons and 10K races.



Students in Ruth Morgano's fourth grade music class use good vocal technique and choreography (a sequence of movements which relate to a particular show tune) as they rehearse for the winter musical, *Jinglebell Jukebox*.

Top ISBE Recognition

Benjamin District 25 recently was granted a certificate of financial recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education for successfully achieving the highest category obtainable on the 2010 School District Financial Profile.

State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D., commended the district in a recent letter stating "Given the economic difficulties school districts are facing, the State Board realizes this is a significant accomplishment."

SCHOOL FINANCE 101

State Profile Shows District Financially Sound

Benjamin District 25 recently received information from the Illinois State Board of Education on their financial profile, with school board members and administrators saying they couldn't be more enthusiastic to learn of the district's 3.9 total profile score.

"This is an excellent score which indicates the strength of school district finances," notes Shelley Clark, Ed.D., district business manager, who adds that Benjamin District 25's 2010 total profile score of 3.9 places the district in the Financial Recognition category.

To monitor the finances of school districts in the state, the Illinois State Board of Education established the "School District Financial Profile" in 2004. Developed to assess the state of each school district's financial health, the financial profile centers on five indicators which are reviewed and calculated annually to provide a total profile score.

The indicators below help clarify how the score is determined:

- 1. Fund Balance to Revenue Ratio:** This indicator reflects the overall ratio of the district. Using only the operating funds of Educational, Operations and Maintenance, Transportation, and Working Cash, and Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund/Social Security (IMRF/SS) funds, this is the result of dividing the end of the fiscal year fund balances by the annual revenues received.
- 2. Expenditure to Revenue Ratio:** Utilizing the Education, Operations and Maintenance, Transportation and Working Cash Funds, this indicator divides the total expenditures in a given year by the revenues of the same funds for the same time period. The fund balances are included in this calculation. This ratio identifies how much is expended for each dollar received.
- 3. Days Cash on Hand:** Using the same funds in the second calculation, this statistic determines the number of days the school district can meet expenses throughout the year if no additional revenues are received.
- 4. Percent of Short-Term Borrowing Ability Remaining:** If a school district needs to borrow funds on a short term basis due to a delay in tax receipts, state funds, etc., this measurement is calculated as a percent of the school district's equalized assessed valuation to determine the amount that can be borrowed.
- 5. Percent of Long-Term Borrowing Remaining:** Also measured as a calculation using a percentage of the school district's equalized assessed valuation minus current long-term debt to determine the amount that can be borrowed.

Each indicator is calculated and assigned a score between 1.00 to 4.00, with 1.00 as the lowest and 4.00 as the highest. The total profile score is the sum of the five weighted scores. Each school district is then assigned to one of the profile categories below:

- » A score of 3.54-4.00 means "Financial Recognition," the highest score requiring no additional reporting to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).
- » A score of 3.08-3.53 is "Financial Review," the next highest level which may be monitored for downward trends.
- » A score of 2.62-3.07 requires close monitoring by the ISBE and offers state assistance with district finances.
- » A score of 1.0-2.61 indicates the "Financial Watch" category. This indicates high risk for financial difficulty and will require monitoring by the ISBE.



Making The Grade in High School!

As Benjamin School District 25 strives to reach higher levels of excellence, educators say one way to evaluate lasting impact on students is to track their progress in high school.

Through continuing collaboration with Community High School District 94, various points of data provide noteworthy indicators of success and achievement for former Benjamin District 25 students.

Among highlights of the 2010-2011 school year:

- » 76 percent of Benjamin students participated in at least one activity or sport;
- » 30 percent of Benjamin students received an award and/or scholarship;
- » 100 percent of Benjamin students graduated;
- » 15 students graduated in the top 10 percent of the class;

- » Almost 75 percent of Benjamin students plan on going to college after graduation; and
- » Benjamin students have an ACT composite score of 22.14, compared to the state average of 20.9.

"The data reassures us as a district that we are laying the necessary foundation for our students to be successful in high school and beyond," says Philip Ehrhardt, Ed.D., district superintendent, who applauds the academic and extracurricular success of former district students. "We will continue to use this information to determine how we can further improve our students' performance."

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.

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.

November 8, 10, 14 & 16
Evening parent-teacher conferences

November 14
7 p.m.
Board of Education meeting

November 14-18
American Education Week

November 21-25
No School,
Thanksgiving break

December 7
Benjamin Band/Choir
Concert, 6:30 pm

December 8
4th Grade Holiday Sing,
Evergreen Elementary
School

December 12
7 p.m.
Board of Education
meeting

December 16
Holiday Bazaar, Evergreen
Elementary School

December 21-Jan. 3
No school, Winter break

January 4
School resumes

January 9
7 p.m.
Board of Education
meeting

January 13
No School, Institute day

January 16
No School, Martin Luther
King's birthday



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

BEN.25 A Benjamin School District 25 communique connecting schools and the community.

connect

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

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