

# BEN.25

# CONNECT

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

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



**SUMMER 2015**

## Dear Friends,

Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.

~ Chinese Proverb

**H**ow would you describe your learning environment when you were in school? My classrooms had dusty chalkboards, rows of desks facing in the same direction, and stuffy air quality. The demand is now for a more effective learning environment. Ways that we learn, collaborate, and communicate have changed significantly. How we currently educate our students is based on extensive research regarding how students learn best.

### Improving the Learning Environment

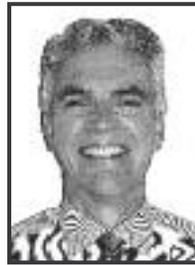
We have used five strategies to transform our classrooms to positively impact learning and teaching.

- 1. Flexibility.** Students learn in a variety of ways. At times many activities will occur simultaneously and each student's use of technology enriches learning. Students work together while other times they will work by themselves. Furniture is now designed to accommodate flexible configurations.
- 2. Air Quality.** Fresh air that is provided at the appropriate temperature enables students and faculty to be more attentive and perform better. Our heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems were improved in two phases in 2006 and 2012. As a result, the air quality and energy savings have greatly improved. The maintenance staff uses the mechanical management system to remotely monitor air temperatures and air flow throughout each school at any time. Also, sections of roofs were replaced this summer at both schools to ensure water does not leak into the buildings.

- 3. Visual Quality.** Research shows that proper lighting improves student achievement. All of our lighting fixtures have been replaced with more effective and more energy efficient devices. The upgrades were partially funded by energy savings grants. Classrooms, gyms and hall walls have been freshly painted with appropriate colors to project a cheerful and bright atmosphere.
- 4. Acoustics.** Most of the upgraded heating and cooling units are located on the roofs rather than in the classrooms, which reduces background noise. The Benjamin Middle School learning media center's acoustics are being improved this summer by adding sound-deadening treatments. Each teaching technology station has speakers to enhance the sound volume in the classrooms.
- 5. Safety.** A secure and safe environment is paramount to productive teaching and learning. Measures, such as surveillance cameras, door access cards, the Raptor visitor check-in system, ALICE safety training, safety drills, and door securing devices illustrate this top priority.

### Shared Services And Collaboration

Benjamin District 25, Winfield District 34, West Chicago Elementary District 33 and Community High School District 94 continue to increase the collaboration and sharing of services to better serve our students and use our financial resources more efficiently. The 33 strategies that have been developed may be found on our website by clicking on the link located on the left-hand side of the Home Page.



Philip Ehrhardt, Ed. D.  
Superintendent

These efforts correlate with the 2009 Consolidation Feasibility Study that complimented the partner schools for their students' achievement, sustaining fund balances, and having well-maintained schools. Shared services' strategies were recommended by the 2012 Classrooms First Commission, chaired by former Lt. Governor Sheila Simon.

Furthermore, this year Governor Rauner formed the Local Government And Unfunded Mandate Task Force chaired by Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti with the objective to prevent waste and use tax dollars more efficiently. I hope the task force's work will further the shared services recommendations made by 2012 Classrooms First Commission.

### Start Of The School Year

One classroom teacher and four special areas teachers retired or resigned this past school year. Only two of the positions have been filled due to more efficient special area scheduling, adjustment for the declining enrollment, and reduction of costs. The average class size of 21.5 students will be similar to last year. The two new teachers are outstanding, and we are excited to welcome them to the Benjamin District 25 team!

The accomplishments of our students are highlighted in another article in this newsletter, "Benjamin Students Set For Academic Success." Their success can be attributed to motivated students, a dedicated school board, committed teachers, and supportive parents and community. I am honored and proud to serve as the superintendent of such an outstanding school district!

Sincerely,

Philip M. Ehrhardt, Ed.D.  
SUPERINTENDENT

# Where Are They Now?

## Benjamin District 25 Spotlight On Bridgette Faron

*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.*

**Bridgette Faron** moved with her family to Carol Stream as she began fifth grade. She graduated from Benjamin Middle School (1995); Community High School, West Chicago (1999); earned an undergraduate degree in elementary education and early childhood education from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (2004); and earned a master of education degree in professional development from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (2007).

**Family Ties:** A resident of Onalaska, WI, a suburb north of La Crosse, Faron's family includes husband, Matt, a loan officer at Firefighter's Credit Union and daughters, Cecilia, 4, and Clara, 2. Mom, Cheryl Laabs, works at the Benjamin District 25 Administration Services Center.

**Career Highlights:** "I fell in love with western Wisconsin during my time in college and decided to stay after college graduation, teaching a kindergarten and first grade looping class at a very small K-12 rural school district in Independence," says Faron. She has been teaching for the last nine years at Viking Elementary in the Holmen School District and is a member of the school continuous improvement team.

**Favorite Benjamin District 25 Memories:** "Definitely outdoor education," says Faron, who notes the team building and learning opportunities while outside in nature were beneficial and became a lifelong love. Trees,



forests, rivers and bluffs for biking, hiking and kayaking are all reasons she loves the La Crosse area. The Washington D.C. trip was another positive experience.

Faron says the running unit in gym class was not a favorite at the time. "I remember the unit culminating with a 20-minute run which was very challenging," states Faron, who says she recalls



the memory often. Today she is an avid runner and has completed two half marathons.

**Some Of My Favorite People:** "Fifth grade homeroom teacher Julie Ganser made every effort to ensure I made a smooth transition to Benjamin," recalls Faron. She also credits Diane Serb in seventh grade for encouragement to express herself and be creative, for offering choices in learning, lots of projects, and group work.

**How did District 25 help prepare me for the future?** "Middle school is really a time when students are figuring out who they are and being able to do that in a safe and supportive environment" states Faron. Benjamin District 25 and its caring staff members fostered my love of school and lifelong learning, guiding me toward a career as a teacher."

## Cooling off at Summer Reading Program



*The Kona Ice truck joined in the fun at Evergreen School's summer reading program. Families were able to purchase cups of shaved ice and choose a flavor to add with a percent of the sales returned to the Evergreen LMC.*



*Lori Peterson, Evergreen School LMC teacher, assists a student with checking in books during Evergreen School's summer reading program. The LMC was open four times during the summer so that students could check out books, make a craft, and use computers to take an Accelerated Reading test or work on IXL math.*

### SCHOOL FINANCE 101

## Adopting a Budget

**B**enjamin District 25 Superintendent Philip Ehrhardt, Ed.D. and Business Manager Shelley Clark, Ed.D. presented the preliminary budget for fiscal year 2016 at the June 8 school board meeting. Total revenues are rising for the fiscal year by .9 percent. Total operating expenditures are estimated to decrease by 1.3 percent. Operating expenditures without Debt Services, Capital Projects, and Working Cash will increase slightly by .1 percent. There are many state funding issues which could negatively impact the district's budget.

Review the tentative budget on the district's website, [www.bendist25.org](http://www.bendist25.org) or in person at the Administration Service Center, 28W250 St. Charles Road, West Chicago. At the September 14 board meeting, a public hearing will be conducted to provide an opportunity for district residents to comment on the proposed budget. If no changes are made, the school board will then adopt the budget.



# Technology Takes Center Stage as District Preps for Fall

Across the district, Benjamin 25 students and staff are using technology to enhance classroom instruction and enrich curriculum.



*Greg Martin and Kimpha Chau exhibit Little Bits electronic kits that students will use to build electronic circuits in the Makerspace at Benjamin Middle School's LMC. The Makerspace also will include robotic kits from Lego Mind Storms, as displayed by Michelle Fiorini.*



*Greg Martin demonstrates how students will use the 3-D printer to create objects from prototypes produced by a CAD program in the Makerspace. Students also will be introduced to pneumatic kits, Raspberry Pi (small computers that students will program), and robotic Spheros.*



*Evergreen School Principal Laura Pfanenstiel and technology support Josh Kairis assist Benny Gomez in relocating and adjusting whiteboards in every classroom to students' height levels so students can become actively engaged in learning activities with the interactive projectors.*



*Michelle Fiorini and Kimpha Chau, summer technology support, enhance the infrastructure by hanging wireless access points in all Benjamin Middle School and Evergreen Elementary School classrooms.*



# Meet Our Board of Education

## A Warm Welcome To Our Newest Board Member



**Anna Taylor, Carol Stream**, serves as school board president. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Purdue University, is a certified paralegal, and currently is a consultant for Weichert Workforce Mobility, focusing on employee benefits and relations services nationwide. Taylor is the mother of two sons—one a Benjamin graduate and the other attending Benjamin Middle School.

**Tammy Mastroianni, Carol Stream**, has been a member of the school board since 2007 and currently serves as vice president. She is the mother of three daughters, all Benjamin District 25 graduates. Currently a supply chain/product development manager at ITW Brands, Mastroianni earned her Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 2014.



**Jodi Krause, Carol Stream**, is board secretary and the mother of two district students. She is a graduate of Community High School in West Chicago and earned her Bachelor's degree in Human Services from Judson University. She is a recreation supervisor for the Barrington Park District.

**Jack Buscemi, Carol Stream**, has been a member of the board since 1997. He is the vice president of loss prevention and security for West Suburban Bank and the father for two Benjamin District 25 graduates. Educational background includes a degree in political science from the University of Illinois-Chicago and a Master's degree in Social Justice from Lewis University.



**Dennis Peterson, West Chicago**, is the longest-serving member of the board having served nearly three decades. He is a medical sales representative for Endocare of Austin, Texas, and is the father of two Benjamin District 25 graduates. His educational background includes a Bachelor of Science degree from Elmhurst College.

**Vince Engstrom, Carol Stream**, is a graduate of both Benjamin District 25 and Community High School in West Chicago. The father of two district students, Vince works as the Technical Manager of Packaging for Nalco Company. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Behavioral Science from National Lewis University.



**Lisa Willuweit, West Chicago**, is the newest member of the Benjamin District 25 Board of Education. A resident of the Benjamin District 25 community since 2000, Willuweit is the Humanities division head at Community High School in West Chicago, overseeing the Art, Music and Social Studies departments.

She and her husband, Chad Pechman, moved into the district specifically for Benjamin 25 schools.

"As a teacher at Community High School, I see firsthand the quality of education within all subjects that the students from Benjamin possess when they enter into their freshmen year at the high school," stated Willuweit. "I like the small community feel of the district and know that I want my own children to have the same quality educational experience I see in the Benjamin students."

Prior to being elected to the board, Willuweit served as a trustee and secretary on the Benjamin Foundation for Educational Excellence. In addition, she joined the Benjamin District 25 Technology Committee, and has volunteered as a PTA Art Awareness helper in both of her children's classrooms.

Willuweit earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in education and a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She has two children in District 25 schools.



# PAVING THE WAY for OPENING DAY

Construction crews work hard to make up for lost time due to heavy rains as they ready Benjamin District 25 schools for Opening Day. New roofs are being installed at the Administration Service Center and Benjamin Middle School.



At Benjamin Middle School, Tom Teslicka, buildings and grounds supervisor, assists with the installation of double swing fire doors which will aid in evacuation of the building in the event of an emergency.

**ANNOUNCING....**

## **PALS CARE, INC.** **2015-2016** **School Year**

PALS Care, Inc. is Benjamin District 25's own childcare provider located at Evergreen School. The program provides a safe, convenient, and stimulating environment for those children who need extended care, and is open to District 25 students and family members, ages three years through eighth grade.

PALS Care, Inc. offers a before and after school program, extended day program for preschool and kindergarten children, Best Buddies preschool, and a popular Sum-Mor Fun program. Based at Evergreen School.

**Call 630-876-7257 or**  
**630-876-7810 (ext. 125)**

FOR INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION

## **Benjamin Students Set For Academic Success**

**B**enjamin School District 25 graduates continue to excel in high school, as evidenced by awards garnered at Community High School's June 3 Honors Night convocation. Even though our students make up only 15 percent of the student body at West Chicago Community High School, their noteworthy academic, leadership, and civic involvement shine even brighter. Some of the awards included:

- *Nineteen percent of our students graduated with Highest Academic Distinction (at least a 5.0 GPA).*
- *Twenty-three percent graduated with Academic Distinction (4.75 to 4.99 GPA).*
- *Both co-presidents of the class graduated from Benjamin District 25.*
- *Our students comprised 29 percent of the members of the National Honor Society recognizing character and academic leadership and service.*
- *Twenty percent earned the President's Education Award.*

**We are proud of our graduates  
for their outstanding accomplishments!**



## We're On Facebook & Twitter

FRIEND us on Facebook and FOLLOW us on Twitter for Benjamin 25 news, photos and more.



## 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.



facebook.com/BenjaminDistrict25



Twitter.com@Bendist25

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.



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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Jodi Krause, Secretary  
Jack Buscemi  
Vince Engstrom  
Dennis Peterson  
Lisa Willuweit  
**Superintendent:**  
Dr. Philip M. Ehrhardt

# Mark Your Calendars

### August 20

New student orientation, Benjamin School, 9 a.m.; Evergreen School, 10 a.m.

### August 24

Institute Day, no student attendance

### August 25

Institute Day, no student attendance 2-3 p.m.

### August 26

School Begins  
Kindergarten orientation, 9-9:45 and 10-10:45 a.m.

### August 27

First day of kindergarten, 8:30-2:55 p.m.  
Preschool supplies drop off, AM Pre 9:30-10:30 a.m.; PM Pre 1:00-2:00 p.m.

### August 28

Preschool Screening, Evergreen School, call 630-876-7810 for appointments

### August 31

First day of preschool

### September 2

Curriculum night at Benjamin School, 6:30 p.m.

### September 3

Back to school night grades pre, K, 1 and 2, Evergreen School

### September 7

Labor Day – no school

### September 9

Early dismissal: Benjamin School 1:45 p.m.; Evergreen School pre, & K, 2 p.m., and grades 1-4 2:15 p.m.

### September 10

Back to school night grades 3 and 4, Evergreen School

### September 14

Board of Education Meeting, Administration boardroom, 7 p.m.

### September 15

Benjamin-Evergreen PTA meeting, Administration boardroom 7:30 p.m.

### October 9

Institute day, no student attendance

### October 12

Columbus day – no school

### October 13

Board of Education Meeting, Administration boardroom, 7 p.m.

### October 14

Early dismissal: Benjamin School 1:45 p.m.; Evergreen School pre, & K, 2 p.m., and grades 1-4, 2:15 p.m.

### October 18

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

Additional calendar dates may be found on the district website at [www.bendist25.org](http://www.bendist25.org).

## Promote Your Business In Ben.25 Connect

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 Services Center at 630-876-7800.

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