

BEN.25 | connect

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

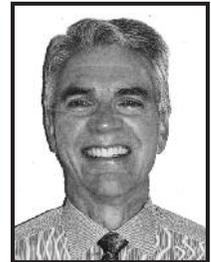
Benjamin District 25 publishes **BEN.25 Connect** for parents and residents.



SUMMER 2012

Dear Friends,

Effective planning involves looking through the “rear-view mirror” to reflect or assess the past, and looking through the “front windshield” to scan the present and future in order to strategize proactively.



Philip Ehrhardt, Ed. D.
Superintendent

As we reflect on the past school year, numerous accomplishments are noteworthy. These accomplishments are highlighted as follows:

Our grades 3-8 students continued to improve their scores on the 2012 ISAT in reading, math and science. The percentage of students meeting the standards ranged from 92 to 100 depending upon the grade level and content area. Also, our goal to increase the percentage of students exceeding the standards has been realized for the 2011-2012 school year.

The property taxes for the school district have decreased this year due to restructuring our debt and taking advantage of the low interest rates. Further details are included in the School Finance 101 article in this issue.

Benjamin graduates excelled in academics, leadership, citizenship, and extracurricular participation at Community High School. Even though Benjamin students made up 17 percent of the high school's student body, half of the class officers were Benjamin graduates, 42 percent of the 2012 honor students (valedictorian, salutatorians, and highest honors) were Benjamin students, 75 percent of the Junior Honor Guard hailed from Benjamin, and 38 percent of the National Honor Society students were former Benjamin students.

Our students performed well in other areas such as chess competition, interscholastic athletics, drama, choir and band.

Our school district earned academic awards including the School Search™ Bright Red Apple™ award, School Search™ Bright A+™ award, and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Academic Excellence awards.

The district's financial condition qualified us to receive the ISBE Certificate of Financial Recognition for the highest category for the School District Financial Profile, and Moody's Financial Rating Service approved the district at a financial bond rating which resulted in a savings of \$25,000.

A state facilities grant for \$5,000 has been awarded to apply toward the heating and air conditioning units' replacement being undertaken this summer. Also, two grants from Lowe's totaling \$6,200 have been received, and will offset the costs of replacing the 38-year-old library/media center shelving units at Evergreen Elementary School, and purchasing paint for various rooms at both schools. The entire list of cost-saving measures and additional revenue can be found on our website.

We again had a balanced operating funds budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012. Fiscal responsibility by the School Board and staff has enabled us to maintain our strong financial condition.

Beginning this school year, the evaluation procedures for teachers, principals and assistant principals have been revised to meet the new state accountability requirements. Staffs are being

trained to effectively use the modified process, which is designed to improve teaching and learning.

I continue to be impressed with the high level of support for education in our community. The combination of talented staff, and positive partnerships with our parents and community provides a high-quality education program to serve tomorrow's leaders who are in our classrooms today. Our school district is an outstanding place for all of us to teach and to learn!

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

SAVE THE DATE
Fall Festival
Saturday, Oct. 20

Evergreen Elementary School
1041 Evergreen Drive Carol Stream, IL 60188

SPONSORED BY THE
Benjamin Foundation For
Educational Excellence

Reprinted with permission from the School Association for Special Education in DuPage.

What is SASED?

The School Association for Special Education in DuPage (SASED) is one of the oldest and largest special education joint agreements in the state of Illinois. SASED consists of 18 member school districts, including Benjamin 25. The organization also provides low incidence special education programming and diagnostic services to an additional 76 districts throughout DuPage and West Cook Counties. For over 53 years SASED has been a leader in developing and providing direct services, professional development and technical assistance to the students, families, professionals and districts within our region.

Why does my district need to be a member of SASED?

A complete continuum of supports and services must be provided for all students with disabilities from ages 3 through 21. Member districts such as Benjamin District 25, West Chicago Elementary School District 33, Winfield School District 34 and Community High School District 94 typically provide special education and related services to the majority of their students with disabilities.

SASED is available to provide specialized personnel to support district programming (example: occupational and physical therapists, sign language interpreters, behavioral analysts, etc.) as well as to provide direct instruction and services for students with severe disabilities which require highly specialized and individualized programming. These SASED-operated classrooms are housed in member district schools across the county, serving students with autism; severe cognitive and physical/health impairments; those students with emotional and behavioral disabilities; and, students who have completed their high school education and require continued supports through a transition program to access post secondary education, find employment and/or access adult services.

SASED also operates specialized programs on a regional basis for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired and severely physically/orthopedically impaired. Direct programming for students with disabilities is a large part of what SASED represents in addition to high-quality professional development, specialized technical assistance and regulatory guidance.

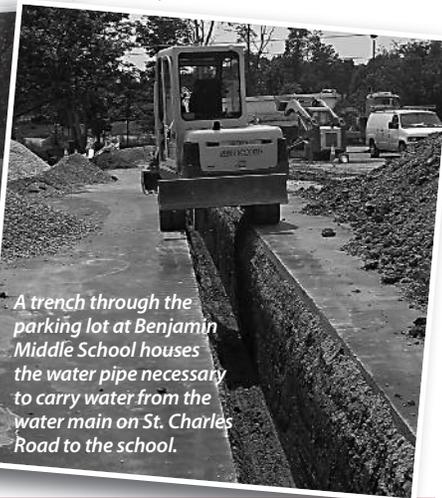
To learn more about SASED, visit www.SASED.org

Lake Michigan Water Arrives!

The Lake Michigan water connection project was completed this summer, bringing fresh drinking water and enhanced fire protection to the Benjamin Middle School and Benjamin District 25 Administrative Service Center campus. Watch for details on a special community fall celebration to be planned by middle school students.



Water pipes were fused together under 480 pounds of pressure at 500 degrees F to create the pipeline that runs next to the septic field.



A trench through the parking lot at Benjamin Middle School houses the water pipe necessary to carry water from the water main on St. Charles Road to the school.

Transition Between Schools Made Easier

By **Giuliana LaMantia, Kristina Manibo, Keyuri Parmar, Liz Ramos, and Carly Tubridy, Chronicle Reporters**

Portions of the following article are reprinted with permission from the May 24, 2012 Wildcat Chronicle, the student newspaper at Community High School, West Chicago.

Entering high school as a freshman can be an exciting yet frightening experience but with the help of teachers and staff from Benjamin, Winfield, and West Chicago middle schools, the eighth graders are well prepared.

"They teach us to depend on ourselves and to do our work without holding our hand," Sotero Barajas from West Chicago Middle School said.

Eighth grade teachers have been stressing the importance of high school.

"There's been a lot of strain and I'm stressed on going to high school. It seems like the teachers and the students are stressing high school and may be a little over the top," Peter Lowellbartell from Benjamin Middle School said. "I'm nervous about (transitioning to high school) but I still think that it's overrated."

Eighth graders plan on getting involved in many sports and clubs that are available.

"I'm going to be playing sports like lacrosse, football, basketball, and maybe wrestling," Branden Winkelman from Benjamin Middle School said.

The teachers believe the eighth graders will do well in high school but have some advice for them.

"Get involved as much as possible, stay on top of your work, and enjoy high school," Danielle DeChristopher, a teacher at Benjamin Middle School, said.

DeChristopher thinks the eighth graders will do well in high school and will have no troubles adjusting to high school.

"I think they'll be fine as long as they keep

doing what they've been doing (in middle school). I think they're ready to take freshman year. The high school has done a lot of good things trying to get them prepared and understand that a lot of the rumors aren't true. I think a lot of them are more confident," DeChristopher said.

The school has taken many steps to let the eighth graders know what the school has to offer.

"We had eighth grade open house which already occurred because we timed that with the first semesters final week. They come in, they get to see the school right after they sign up for their courses. I know we have the sports festival even though that's kind of an incentive for them, it helps them to come into the school and be familiar," Principal Moses Cheng said.

Benjamin and Winfield middle school students came to tour the school to get a feel of what it's like during a regular day.

"We had our ambassador kids walk them around and give them a tour of the building while school was in session," Cheng said.

For the past four years, WeGo in with Pride has allowed freshmen to be in the school without upperclassmen on the first day of school.

"The freshmen are on their own schedule and (the upperclassmen) go home earlier, and we put the freshmen through an orientation again and meet the coaches, meet the sponsors, give them a little speech. They get to go in the school and follow their schedule with no one else in the building but freshmen," Cheng said.



Property Tax Decrease For Benjamin District 25 Residents

This article is the first of a two-part series that will explain the property tax process and how a property tax reduction was accomplished for Benjamin District 25 residents.

The Board of Education directs district administrators to assess the district's financial situation on an ongoing basis. Information provided to the school board this year enabled them to make prudent fiscal decisions that accomplished a goal of reducing the school district portion of individual property tax bills by an estimated \$50.

About Property Taxes

The largest single source of Illinois public education funding is the property tax. For some school districts, particularly in the northeast section of the state, property taxes are the most substantial revenue source accounting for more than half of the total revenues.

A school district's "wealth" is based on the total value of taxable property within a school district's boundaries. This includes residential properties, business, vacant land and industry, minus the tax-exempt property such as churches, universities, and some hospitals which are excluded from paying property taxes. The value of property varies depending on location and type, which



accounts for some school districts having a higher property wealth than others.

How Your Property Tax Bill Is Determined

Taxable property by law is to be based on one-third of the property's actual selling price (market value). For example, if a home has a market value of \$300,000, it should be assessed at one-third or \$100,000. This is called the assessed valuation. A state equalization factor, also known as the multiplier, is assigned to a county to bring the average countywide property assessment level to one-third. If a county is assessed correctly, the multiplier will be 1.0. It is then adjusted if a county is over assessed (decrease the multiplier) or under assessed (increase the multiplier).

DuPage County's multiplier for tax year 2011 (payable in 2012) is 1.0. Therefore, if a \$300,000 home is assessed at one-third of its market value and the multiplier is 1.0 the Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) would be \$100,000.

To determine the tax bill for the above home with an EAV of \$100,000, the formula would be:

Property Owners EAV/100 x Total Tax Rate = Property Tax Bill.

If a total tax bill (schools, village, libraries, etc.) totals \$4, the tax bill would be:

$$\$100,000/100 \times \$4 = \$4,000$$

Each year the assessed valuations and multipliers are reviewed and any necessary adjustments take place.

A school district's new tax revenue each year is limited to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or five percent, whichever is less. Furthermore, the EAV of new property within the school district boundary is added. The CPI that was used to apply to the 2011 taxes is 1.5 percent.

For Benjamin District 25, the increase in the CPI alone would provide an additional \$130,842. The new property in the school district is adding an additional \$7,400. Total new dollars for the 2012-13 school fiscal year equal \$138,242.

The school district operates on a \$12 million budget. This provides approximately one percent new funds. Combined with projected state budget reductions, total projected new income for the operating funds of the school district is less than one percent.

A second article in the fall newsletter will explain the strategies that Benjamin District 25 used to reduce the district's portion of your tax bill by approximately \$50.

EVERGREEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL RECEIVES \$5000 GRANT

Lowe's Donates Money For Library Shelving Project

Evergreen Elementary School has received a \$5,000 Lowe's Toolbox for Education grant for replacement of 38-year-old non-functioning library shelving.

After 38 years of shelving and re-shelving books by pre-school through 4th grade students, the bookshelves in the elementary school library had become worn, damaged and unsafe. The book collection increased tremendously from when the shelves were originally installed in 1974. Shelves became overcrowded, which caused damage to the books as young students removed and re-shelved books while trying to decide which book looked interesting enough to check out that week

"Our grant application was based on the goal of providing our students with a fully-functioning and better-organized library—a library where students can easily see and safely remove the books they are interested in reading and just as easily return to the shelf the books they may not want to check out that day," says Lori Peterson, Evergreen LMC teacher.

"Our school and community will greatly benefit from this grant," says Philip Ehrhardt, Ed.D., superintendent, Benjamin District 25. "We wish to thank our partners at Lowe's for generously supporting this important project."

All K-12 public schools in the United States are eligible for the Toolbox for Education program. More information is available at www.ToolboxforEducation.com.



Mark Your Calendars!

Aug. 28	School begins, half day in-service
Sept. 3	Labor Day, no school
Sept. 5	Benjamin Middle School Open House
Sept. 6 & 13	Evergreen Elementary School Open House
Oct. 5	Institute Day, no school
Oct. 8	Columbus Day, no school
Oct. 12	Evergreen School Improvement Day 11:40 a.m. dismissal
Oct. 20	Fall Festival at Evergreen Elementary School
Nov. 6, 8, 12 & 14	Evening Parent-Teacher Conferences

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

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.

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.

**ECRWSS
POSTAL
CUSTOMER**

NonProfit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 179
West Chicago, IL 60185

Warm Welcome For New Evergreen Principal

A warm welcome to Laura Pfanenstiel, who returns to Benjamin District 25 as the newly named principal at Evergreen Elementary School.



In education for almost 25 years, Pfanenstiel started her career teaching first grade in Palatine for seven years and then took time off to raise her children. She joined the Benjamin District 25 team and worked as a teacher at both Benjamin and Evergreen Schools for nine years, teaching first and second grade as well as eighth grade language arts and social studies. She prepared and presented differentiated curriculum and was involved in developing and implementing the Leading to Read phonics program.

After teaching in District 25 for nine years, Pfanenstiel was named assistant principal at Evergreen Elementary and mentored by Jean Peterson, former principal. During her time as assistant principal she evaluated staff, developed "Family Science Night," updated the crisis manual, and enhanced the CHARACTER COUNTS! program. She left Evergreen to accept a principal position in Elmhurst District 205, where her work included implementing a school-wide Response to Intervention Program (RtI), monitoring student growth, supervising the K-2 and 3-5 special

education instructional classrooms housed in the building, and introducing, implementing and nurturing a Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) philosophy with her school and administrative colleagues.

Pfanenstiel received her master's degree in Educational Leadership from Aurora University in 2004, where she researched and revised an existing Guided Reading Program, and received her bachelor of science degree in education from Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

A resident of St. Charles, she has two grown children, who attended Evergreen and Benjamin during their elementary and middle school years. The newly named principal says she enjoys to spending time with her family, gardening, and golfing.

Kindergarten Registration

Kindergarten registration is ongoing. 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. Fees for registration, milk or juice and bussing will

need to be paid at this time.

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

All documents must show proper address. For information, call the Administration Service Center at 630-876-7800.



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

Board of Education:
Tammy Mastroianni, President
Janice Bedard, Vice President
Gregg Lemkau, Secretary
Jack Buscemi
Cyndy Ciolino
Dennis Peterson
Anna Taylor
Superintendent:
Dr. Philip M. Ehrhardt

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

SUMMER 2012



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