

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 2016

Dear Friends,

"Upon the subject of education... I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as people may be engage in."

~Abraham Lincoln

Importance of Education and Fiscal Stability

As we embark upon a new school year, the importance of education continues to grow in order for students to be successful in this complex and ever-changing world. Recently, the Illinois legislature realized the need to fund education by passing a stop-gap one-year budget so all schools in the state would be able to open and operate. Our district's long-term focus is to keep raising academic excellence while sustaining fiscal stability.

Planning to Meet Student Needs & Being Fiscally Responsible

In my last letter, I mentioned efforts are underway to develop plans to address educational programs, safety and security, and facility improvement needs. Also, the restructuring of debt is being targeted so taxes could be decreased.

Educational Programming, Safety and Security & Facility Improvement

The planning began at the July 27, 2015 school board retreat, and the creation of the plans has been conducted with the involvement of the district's stakeholders and communicated openly. The activities are chronicled on a timeline for developing and implementing the Capital Projects Plan and are listed in the News section on the district's website. A summary of the planning process, proposed projects and financing options are explained below. A detailed description can also be accessed on the district's website under the News section.

Examples of projects addressing educational programming include updating three Benjamin Middle School science labs, purchasing two portable science labs for Evergreen Elementary School, renovating the Evergreen Elementary School cafeteria to also serve as a large-group instruction room, upgrading technology infrastructure, and replacing student computer devices.

Samples of safety and security projects include reconfiguring the Evergreen Elementary School front entrance to better control entry to the building, upgrading the burglar system and interfacing it with the security system at both schools, and installing an elevator/lift at Benjamin Middle School so there is access to the second floor for students, staff and visitors with mobility issues. Also, specified sections of the roofs and blacktop/playgrounds that are nearing life expectancy would be replaced.

One facility project is to replace the interior fluorescent light fixtures that are much more energy efficient and last longer. The exterior lights have been upgraded over the past three years.

Financing Options

Every five to six years, bonds have been sold to fund capital projects since the needs exceed the annual budget revenue. In 2005, bonds were used to pay for Phase 1 of the heating and air conditioning project for sections of both schools. The remaining parts of the schools, except the middle school large gym, were completed in



Phase 2 in 2012 along with security projects. In 2017-2018, there will be a timely opportunity to sell bonds and lower the debt service tax rate by about 16 percent. This means that the owner of a house assessed at \$250,000 would experience an estimated \$73 annual tax decrease.

The types of bonds would be 1) a petition bond of \$2 million sold in February 2017, and 2) a combination of life safety bond and referendum bond for \$4.9 million sold in February 2018, based on the outcome of the April 4, 2017 referendum. A detailed timeline for selling these bonds is shown in the News section on the district's website.

We Value Your Input

Your feedback continues to be sought regarding the plan to fund these projects to meet the needs of our students in a fiscally responsible manner. Feel free to call or email me to discuss any suggestions, questions, or concerns that you may have. My contact information is listed on the back page.

Sincerely,

Philip M. Ehrhardt, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT



Meet Your Benjamin District 25 School Board Members

Back left: Lisa Willuweit-member, Anna Taylor-vice president, Jack Buscemi-member, and Dennis Peterson member.
Front left: Jodi Krause-president, Vince Engstrom-secretary, and Tammy Mastroianni-member.

Applause! Applause!

The National School Public Relations Association recently awarded Benjamin District 25's quarterly Ben.25/Connect community newsletter an Award of Honorable Mention in their 2016 national competition.



The newsletter was selected from among 965 publication entries from across the country. The Benjamin District 25 newsletter team, including Superintendent Dr. Philip Ehrhardt, Janice Youngwith and Karen Olson, as well as the West Chicago Printing Company, were recognized for their efforts at the Aug. 8 Board of Education meeting.

Where Are They Now?

Benjamin District 25 Spotlight On Annette (Eichenberger) Melcher

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.

Annette Melcher is a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Air Force and has been working in the World Class Athlete program since graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 2014. Since entering the academy in 2010 she has dedicated her life to training---with the past two years resulting in intensive training and conditioning. She qualified for the 2016 Olympic trials in Track and Field July 1-4 in Eugene, Oregon.

Career Highlights:

Melcher was named an NCAA Division 1 Second-Team All-American in the Women's 800-meter run and is a two-time USA Track & Field championship qualifier. She ranked in the top 30 athletes at both competitions in the Women's 800-meter run.

Educational Background:

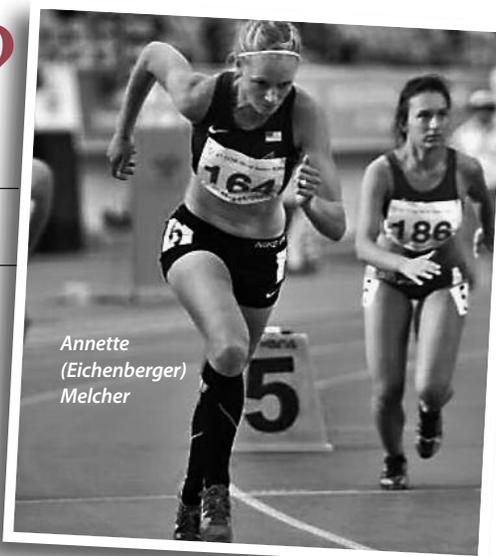
She graduated from Benjamin Middle School (2006), Community High School in West Chicago (2010) and the U.S. Air Force Academy (2014).

Family Ties:

Family includes Johnny Melcher, spouse; Ike and Val Eichenberger, parents and district residents; and siblings, who are all Benjamin District 25 graduates. Jack, 21, a senior in the U.S. Air Force; Blake, 19, a sophomore at Xavier University; and Sabrina, 15, a sophomore at St. Francis High School.

Favorite Benjamin District 25 Memory:

Breaking the school record for the mile in track was a middle school highlight, says Melcher, who also has fond memories of the trip to Six Flags Great America and the talent shows.



Annette (Eichenberger) Melcher

How District 25 helped prepare me for the future?

Experiments in Jim Allard's science class such as showing how soap works by reacting with water to trap dirt particles ranked among her favorite Benjamin lessons. "I was always engaged and challenged to work hard," she says. "Playing three sports certainly kept me busy and out of trouble!"



New Technology on Campus

Benjamin Middle School students will be on the cutting edge of technology this fall exploring new opportunities in Science, Technology, Math & Engineering (STEM), and career pathways with special extra-curricular clubs and on-site technology.



Benjamin Middle School students will have an opportunity to enhance their educational experience using zSpace, an all-in-one virtual reality computer. Wearing metal frame zSpace glasses, an eighth grade student uses a stylus to select an activity and then dissects the layers of the aquifer.



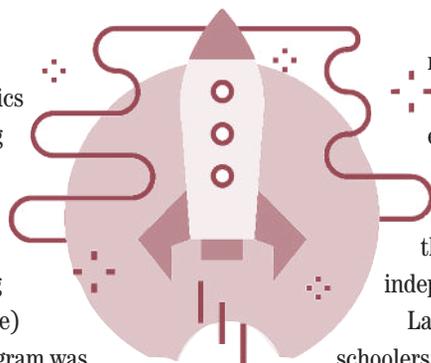
The technology summer team—Cody Anderson, Ryan Howington and Jackie Parent—have imaged all staff laptops and work to image students' lab computers.

Exciting new MakerSpace technology enhancements and special zSpace technology are sure to draw rave reviews as students embrace the new zSpace workstations chock full of 3-D technology. zSpace models and simulations will allow students to explore complex systems and issues in fields such as plate tectonics and human anatomy. For example:

- Using a stylus to rotate images and move pieces, students will be able to examine deep layers of large-scale system interactions, maps of land and water patterns and show how the Earth's plates have moved great distances, collided and spread apart.
- Students will be able to see how the sun and a collection of planets, their moons and asteroids are held in orbit.

New also will be a highly-anticipated robotics club, and an engineering design and challenge club known as the Benjamin Middle School H.O.P.E. (Helping Other People Everywhere) group. This popular program was first piloted in the 2015-2016 school year, and will evolve into an official extra-curricular club pairing senior engineering students and design teams from the University of Illinois-Chicago with middle schoolers in their problem-solving, design and build projects.

This collaboration offers students a first-hand opportunity to see how



mechanical, electrical, automotive and other engineers interface and how their work can make the difference in the lives of those facing independence challenges.

Last year our middle schoolers helped pinpoint needs, provided design feedback, and suggested modifications for projects designed to aid students with special needs in our own district. Participants were enthusiastically welcomed and recognized at the UIC engineering expo, an event showcasing final senior level design projects.

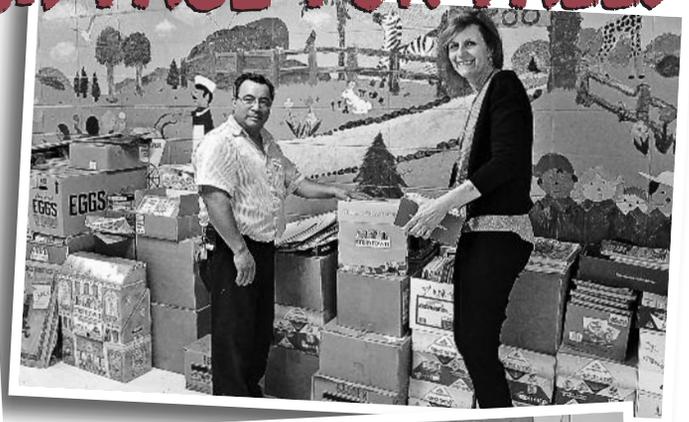


PUTTING ON A FRESH FACE FOR FALL!



Hallways are stacked with boxes, tables and entire classrooms of materials to make way for a thorough cleaning.

It's all about teamwork! Evergreen School kindergarten rooms undergo a facelift as the old carpeting was removed and new tile installed in its place. Principal Laura Pfanenstiel assists to make the project go more quickly.



Rave Reviews For Evergreen LMC Summer Hours



Young readers found respite from the lazy days of summer at Evergreen Elementary School's LMC.

Parents were invited to accompany their students to the Evergreen Elementary School library media center on special dates this summer 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.

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 Honors Night presentation

29%

...of our students graduated with Highest Academic Distinction (at least a 5.0 GPA).

32%

...graduated with Academic Distinction (4.75 to 4.99 GPA).

66%

... 2 of 3 co-presidents of the class graduated from Benjamin District 25.

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.

We are proud of our graduates for their noteworthy accomplishments!



Schools' Drinking Water Confirmed Safe

Since lead has been found in some schools, the drinking water from Evergreen Elementary School and Benjamin Middle School was tested in July. All of the locations sampled tested within the Environmental Protection Agency Drinking Water Guidelines.

The water was tested using two techniques: first draw and second draw, after running the water for five minutes. "It is vitally important that water be tested by a certified company to ensure the safety of our students, staff and visitors," states Philip Ehrhardt, Ed.D., superintendent. "Confirming the water quality is reassuring to all of us."

New Bottle Refill Stations!



Students fill their water bottles at the drinking fountain and bottle refill station in the Benjamin Middle School large gymnasium. When polled regarding what improvements should be made to their school, students overwhelmingly requested bottle refill stations. The drinking fountain and bottle refill stations contain individual filters to enhance the quality of the taste of the water. Bottle refill stations are being added to water coolers in both schools.

ANNOUNCING....

PALS CARE, INC. **2016-2017** **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

SCHOOL FINANCE 101

The 2016-2017 tentative budget that had been reviewed previously by the Finance Committee was presented by Shelley Clark, Ed.D., business manager, at the June 13 school board meeting. At the time, Dr. Clark stated, "This budget is very dynamic due to the legislature not passing a state education budget for the 2016-2017 school year."

The tentative budget includes:

- Funds for the proposed \$2 million working cash bond sale in the spring of 2017 and projected transfers and expenses of \$200,000 for planned projects have been included in the tentative budget.
- Operating revenues will be increased by .67 percent which amounts to \$75,000, excluding the sale of the proposed working cash bonds.
- Operating expenditures are projected to increase by 3.5 percent, excluding debt service, capital projects, and working cash.
- Without the working cash bond revenues, capital projects, and debt service funds the net operating revenue exceeds expenditures by \$15,148.

The tentative budget may be viewed on the district's website, www.bendist25.org, and is available for inspection at the district office. At the Sept. 12 school board meeting, a public hearing will be conducted to provide an opportunity for comments from Benjamin School District 25 residents. If no changes are needed that evening, the school board will approve the budget.



We're On Facebook & Twitter

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



facebook.com/BenjaminDistrict25

twitter.com/Bendist25

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.

Online: Visit our home page at www.bendist25.org and don't forget to LIKE our Benjamin School District 25 Facebook page.

Facebook: Visit www.facebook.com/BenjaminDistrict25 and LIKE the page to receive periodic news updates from Benjamin District 25.

Twitter: Follow us at www.Twitter.com/Bendist25

Benjamin District 25's Ben.25 Connect community newsletter has been recognized since 2010 with top Awards of Excellence and Awards of Merit by the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association. The newsletter recently received national recognition with an honorary mention.



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
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Permit No. 179
West Chicago, IL 60185

Mark Your Calendars

August 18

New student orientation
9 a.m. Benjamin Middle School
10 a.m. Evergreen Elementary School

August 22-23

Teacher Institute Days,
No Student Attendance

August 24

First Day of School
Grades 5-8, 7:42 a.m.-2:45 p.m.,
Grades 1-4, 8:30 a.m.-3:05 p.m.

Benjamin Picture Day
Kindergarten orientation,
9-9:45 a.m. names A-L
10-10:45 a.m. names M-Z

August 25

First Day of School for
Kindergarten

Preschool supply drop off
AM Preschool 9:30-9:45 a.m.
PM Preschool 1-2 p.m.

August 26

Preschool screening
8:30-10:30 a.m. or 12:30-2:30 p.m.

Benjamin-Evergreen PTA Back
To School party, Coral Cove,
Carol Stream

August 29

First Day of Preschool

August 30-31

PTA Book Fair, Benjamin
Middle School

August 31

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

September 1

Back to School Night, 6:30 p.m.,
Evergreen Elementary School,
grades Pre-K, K, 1 & 2

September 5

Labor Day, No school

September 8

Back to School Night, 6:30 p.m.,
Evergreen Elementary School,
grades 3 & 4

September 12

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

September 23

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

September 28-29

PTA Book Fair, Evergreen
Elementary School

October 7

Institute Day, No student
attendance

October 10

Columbus Day, No school

October 11

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

October 23

Foundation Fall Festival,
12- 4 p.m., Evergreen
Elementary School

October 26

Fall Sports Awards, 6:30 p.m.
Benjamin small gym

November 1, 3, 10

Evening Parent/Teacher
Conferences, 4:30-8:00 p.m.

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

Ben.25 Connect Newsletter 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 Services Center at 630-876-7800.

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

Connect



Board of Education:
Jodi Krause, President
Anna Taylor, Vice President
Vince Engstrom, Secretary
Jack Buscemi
Tammy Mastroianni
Dennis Peterson
Lisa Willuweit
Superintendent:
Dr. Philip M. Ehrhardt

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