



Important News: Earlier Registration for 2009-2010 School Year



Student registration packets for the 2009-2010 school year will be mailed home during the week of April 6th. The deadline for returning registration forms is **Friday, May 15th**.

“The earlier registration timeline will allow principals to make class assignments more efficiently. It also will help me to determine appropriate staffing needs earlier and hire the best teachers, if more teachers are required,” said Superintendent Dale Mitchell.

Registration fees also are due on the May 15th deadline. Cash, check, money order, Visa or MasterCard are accepted.

Please turn in your registration forms by May 15th, even if you are unable to pay registration fees at that time. Contact the district office to make arrangements for payments.

A Letter from the Superintendent

The current economy poses difficulties for families, businesses, and yes, for school districts, too. It is now clear that the downturn is severe, will not be short-lived, and will affect many sectors in the economy.

I am writing to update you on the effects of the economic downturn on School District #153, and our efforts to develop an appropriate response. Let me summarize what we know so far.

The Illinois State Board of Education is proposing essentially flat funding to schools next year. It would eliminate

some smaller programs such as the class size reduction grant in order to meet their larger obligations. Moreover, the latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) is 0.1 percent, an unprecedented low rate. Local property tax increases are tied to the CPI, so the school district cannot rely on increased revenues from this source. The newly-passed federal economic stimulus bill contains significant funding for education. However, we get only 3.5 percent of our budget from federal funds, so it is unclear how or if the bill would affect District #153.

(Continued on page 3)

Witnessing History: How School District 153 Experienced the Presidential Inauguration

In darkened and mostly silent gymnasiums throughout the school district, District 153 staff and students were riveted to the live telecast of the inauguration of the nation's first African-American President on January 20.

“One student came up to me after seeing the inauguration speech to confess that he didn't really understand all the big words being said, but he clearly understood the significance of the day,” said Churchill Principal Cece Coffey. “I'm so glad we were able to make this historic moment available to our students. It is something they will remember for the rest of their lives.”

Declared *Red, White and Blue Day* in the school district, Inauguration Day was the culmination of many days of inauguration-related activities and lessons plans

throughout the school district.

Many teachers took advantage of the historic moment to reinforce writing skills. Willow School students wrote letters to the new president to express their hopes for his administration. Millennium School

(Continued on page 3)



Students and staff at Churchill School listen attentively as Barack Obama takes the oath of office.

5-Year Plan: Focus Areas and Goals

Finances and Facilities:

- Improve the financial health of the school district.
- Develop a comprehensive, dynamic five-year facilities plan.

Student Achievement/Needs:

- Expand the Birth-to-Five initiative
- Close the achievement gap in all sub-groups as measured by Adequate Yearly Progress. (AYP)

Family/School/Community Connections:

- Welcome all families into the school community
- Communicate and collaborate with community

Staff Development/Recruitment:

- Develop a comprehensive district-wide recruitment and retention plan
- Provide staff with professional development opportunities that support district initiatives and enhance student achievement

Diversity:

- Promote diversity awareness across school district community
- Become a model for diversity education
- Establish committee to oversee first two goals

School Board Approves 5-Year Plan

At its February 9th meeting, the school board approved a broad, strategic plan that will provide direction for the operation of Homewood schools over the next five years.

The 2009-2014 Strategic Plan is the result of an inclusive planning process involving the contributions of about 50 parents, staff and community members. Meeting over two nights in December, these dedicated people volunteered their time and talents to help determine school district priorities and chart a course of action for future student learning.

The group analyzed the critical issues that

would face our schools over the next five years. Then they identified specific goals and strategies in five focus areas to meet those challenges. (See box, left, for focus areas and goals.) The full plan can be viewed online at the district website, www.hsd153.org, or copies are available at each school and the district administrative office.

"This process and the plan that resulted from it are invaluable to maintaining the high standards and tradition of excellence that Homewood residents have come to expect from their schools," said Dr. Mitchell.

Acclaimed Authors Visit 6th, 7th-Graders

Have you ever wished you could talk to the author of a favorite or thought-provoking book? Millennium School 6th-graders and James Hart School 7th-graders were recently given the opportunity to do just that.

Doug Wilhelm, author of the celebrated book, *The Revealers*, visited 7th-graders at James Hart School on December 15 via video conferencing technology. All 7th-grade students and teachers read and discussed *The Revealers*, which examines the issue of bullying, as part of the school district's SEEDkids program.

Speaking from his hometown in Vermont, Wilhelm talked about his book and fielded questions from students.

On January 23, Millennium School 6th-graders were honored with a special visit by Cynthia DeFelice, best-selling author of about 30 books for children. DeFelice's novel, *Weasel*, has been part of the 6th-grade curriculum for ten years. Millennium students had just finished reading *Weasel*, so they were chock full of questions for its author. Afterwards, students lined up to have her autograph books.



Above, author Cynthia DeFelice autographs one of her books for a student.



Left, a 7th-grade student poses a question to author Doug Wilhelm about his book, *The Revealers*.

DeFelice's appearance was made possible by a grant from the Homewood Foundation for Educational Excellence.



Witnessing History

(Continued from page 1)

students wrote letters to local veterans to thank them for their service to the country. Other students wrote essays describing what they would do to make America an even better place to live.

Art classes throughout the district created posters interpreting the theme, "Celebrating the American Spirit." Those posters were displayed by various businesses throughout downtown and Southgate areas of Homewood.

James Hart students were challenged to answer history-related trivia questions during morning announcements each day.

Even the district's littlest learners—the Early Childhood and Pre-Kindergarten students (below)— participated in their own inauguration day parade through the hallways of Willow School, waving flags and pulling decorated wagons as "floats."



Above, Homewood's The Art Corner devoted their entire front window to displaying inauguration-themed posters created by district students.

Top, Willow School students spread blankets on the floor of the gym and ate a picnic lunch as they watched the inauguration on television.

Letter from the Superintendent

(Continued from page 1)

Where does this leave us? It is unlikely that we will have to make drastic cuts to programs to get through the current fiscal year. Our planning focuses on fiscal years to come. The Administration, working with the School Board, is developing options to ensure the financial health of the school district in ways that will not damage the educational experience of our students.

I will continue to communicate with you regarding our challenges and our plans to address them.

-Dr. Dale Mitchell

James Hart Musicians Heading to Summer Camp

The District 153 Parent Music Association (PMA) has awarded half-scholarships to the following 7th-grade James Hart Choir, Band and Orchestra students. The students will attend a full-week Summer Music Camp at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. The ISYM Summer Camps have been in existence for over 50 years and are recognized as the finest summer music education experiences available in the USA. Our PMA has been sending deserving music students to this camp since the 1950's.

Congratulations to this year's scholarship winners!

Choir

Abigail Hamann
Skylar Hildebrand
Brenden Jones
Adam Kammin
Anna Meehan
Chariti Phillips
Rebecca Rexroat
Katie Sinwelski

Band

Sarah Nieves
MacKenzie Murphy
Jack Reed
Richard Lewis
Emma Lane
Zac Cairo
Kayla Griffith

Orchestra

Maeve Coates-Welsh
Joseph Donermeyer
Nathan Gonzalez
Nyla Pruitt
Mineru Suzuki
Alex Worman

Homewood School District 153

Dr. Dale Mitchell, Superintendent
Jacqui Parisi, Business Manager
Gail Huizinga, Coordinator for Teaching, Learning and Accountability
Sue Mecozzi, Director of Student Support Services
Eric Farmer, Network Administrator
Shelley Peck, Communications

Board of Education

Steve Anderson
Thomas Brabec, Vice President
Gale Gallagher, Secretary
Deb Havighorst
Greg Lawrence
Shelly Marks, President
Jim Schmidt

District Administrative Office
18205 Aberdeen Street
Homewood, Illinois 60430
708.799.5661

www.hsd153.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 106
Homewood, IL

Postal Patron

Willow School

1804 Willow Road
708.798.3720
Mary Ann Savage, Principal
Melissa Lawson, Asst. Principal

Churchill School

1300 West 190th Street
708.798.3424
Cece Coffey, Principal
Tonya Morris, Asst. to the Principal

Millennium School

18211 Aberdeen Street
708.799.8697
Shirley Watkins, Principal
Mary Kay Gardiner, Asst. Principal
David McAtee, Dean of Students

James Hart School

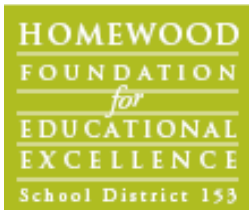
18220 Morgan Street
708.799.5544
Michael Klein, Principal
Laura Ugo, Asst. Principal
John Ugo, Dean of Students

Mark Your Calendars for These Events!



SPRING
for
Homewood
Schools

Please Join Us
for a Night of
Fun and
Fundraising in
Support of Our
Schools!



Saturday, March 7, 7pm-12 am
Balagio Ristorante
175th & Dixie Highway
\$40 per person (\$45 at the door)

(708) 647-2390 for tickets
or more information



Kindergarten Orientation
Monday, March 16, 7:00 pm

Kindergarten Registration
Wednesday, March 25, 2:00—6:30 pm

*Children must be 5-years-old by Sept. 1 to enroll in kindergarten for the 2009-2010 school year.

@ Willow School

1804 Willow Road
(708) 798-3720 for more information



Happy 200th Birthday, Abe Lincoln!

District 153 students and staff observed the 200th birthday of President Abraham Lincoln in many ways including:

- In conjunction with the Homewood Heritage Committee, district students collected \$1,836.15 in pennies to be donated to the Homewood Public Library. The library will use the money to buy new books about our 16th President.
- Many district classrooms participated in a nation-wide simultaneous reading of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address on Feb. 12.



Above, Krista Sparrow's 7th-grade class participates in a national effort to set a new Guinness World Record for the number of people to read the Gettysburg Address.

Help Wanted: 153 Goes Green!

School District #153 is looking for parents and other interested community members to join a new "Green" work group. The "Green Team" will be charged with helping the school district become more environment-friendly as well as identifying funding and other opportunities for environmental education experiences for district students. If interested, please contact Superintendent Dale Mitchell at (708) 799-5661.