

## D75SPOTLIGHT

[www.d75.org](http://www.d75.org)

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### *Message from the Superintendent*

**Dr. Kevin Myers, Superintendent, Districts 75 and 120**

As we reach Spring Break and head into the final two months of our school year, it's a good opportunity to review our progress and look ahead to finishing our year strong.

There have been so many successes between winter break and spring break. Much of the credit for those successes goes to our students, staff and parents as well as our collaborative efforts among area school districts and community organizations.



In February, our staff shined as leaders during the first-ever county-wide Institute Day hosted by the Lake County Regional Office of Education. While most of our teachers participated, a number of them made presentations on topics such as Dual Language, Developing an Adaptive Health Curriculum and Empowering Multilingual Leaders. They shared the secrets behind our success to more than 2,000 educators from across Lake County.

Our students had a chance to shine early this year as Mechanics Grove fifth-graders joined Carl Sandburg to perform the musical, "Descendants." The show was the culmination of a lot of work by our students, staff and our supportive parents. With all that effort, it was no surprise that the show itself was a big hit.

The D75 staff has been both creative and resourceful this year, coming up with programs for our students that keep them engaged in learning in new and interesting ways.

At Carl Sandburg, our seventh-graders read an amazing book called "A Long Walk to Water," about the 17,000 African boys who were forced to leave their families and their homes in the 1980s and '90s and walk for months to seek refuge. Our staff then invited two of the Lost Boys to Carl Sandburg to speak with our students and answer their questions. It was a wonderful opportunity to see a fact-based novel come to life with an in-person visit.

The staff creativity continued in the last week of February during our “Read Across Mundelein” Week. We planned theme days such as “Reading Makes You Bright,” “Hats Off to Reading,” and “Reading is Relaxing.” Mundelein Mayor Steve Lentz read to our Washington students while Carl Sandburg competed in a door decorating contest. Things got real exciting at Washington School when Chicago Wolves hockey mascot “Skates” made a surprise visit to read with students.

Students even got excited about the Illinois Assessment of Readiness testing when Mechanics Grove worked with Mundelein High School to bring the Mustang Drumline in to perform with students. It certainly got their attention and kicked off testing week in a positive way.

We’re very proud to be able to provide such wonderful educational opportunities for your children and pleased that our collaboration among our schools, districts and community has worked out to the benefit of the students.

As a community update, I wanted to let you know that District 120 continues to look at areas of Mundelein High School in need of updates including mechanical, cafeteria and classrooms. As future (or current) MHS parents, these building improvement plans will have an impact on your students. I encourage you to watch for updates in the months ahead. The Mundelein High School website will be the primary source of information on the improvement plans.

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## ***School Board News***

### **Board News & Notes**

#### **Audit Report - *Board Approved***

The District 75 School Board approved the district’s audit report, meeting the annual state requirements. It showed a slight decrease in operating reserves and a slight increase in the Capital Projects Fund due to interest income. The district also retired just over \$1.5 million of debt principal during fiscal year 2022-23.



[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

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### **D75 names new middle school principal**

The District 75 School Board on Feb. 27 approved the hiring of Dr. Andrew Vondran to serve as the next principal at Carl Sandburg Middle School.

Vondran will begin at CSMS on July 1, following the retirement of long-time CSMS Principal Mark Pilut. He was selected following the feedback of both staff and students who asked that the new



principal be approachable, trustworthy, and knowledgeable of middle school learners.

“We are very thrilled that Dr. Vondran has all of those characteristics,” said Dr. Sarah Cacciatore, Deputy Superintendent for Districts 75 and 120. “He will be a great fit for the school and our community.”

Currently in his seventh year as an assistant principal at Hubble Middle School in Wheaton Warrenville School District 200, Vondran also spent six years teaching middle school math and social studies.

He earned a Bachelor’s Degree from Eastern Illinois University in 2006, a Masters of Education Degree from Aurora University in 2010, a General Administration Masters Degree from the University of St. Francis in 2013, and a Doctorate in Education from Northern Illinois University in 2023.



### **Carl Sandburg Stage project delayed**

In a disappointing turn of events, District 75 has delayed the Carl Sandburg stage addition project due to a higher-than-expected rise in construction costs.

While the project was originally slated to start during spring break, project bids came in over-budget. At this point, District officials will re-evaluate the scope and timing of the project and seek new bids in the fall. District 75 continues to be dedicated to this

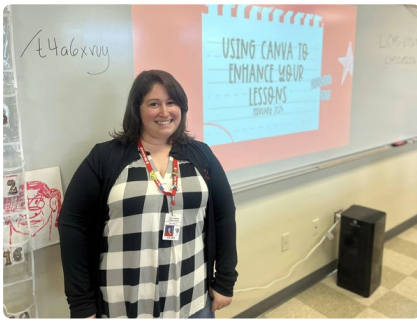
project and look forward to the day we have a stage at the middle school.

### **D75 staff takes leadership role at countywide Institute Day**

The Lake County Regional Office of Education hosted its first-ever countywide Institute Day in February. Up to 2,000 educators and staff members from schools across Lake County attended at two different locations.

Not only did most of our district 75 teachers participate, but several made presentations. They shared the secrets behind our success to more than 2,000 educators from across Lake County.

The presentations included: “Becoming Dual Language” (Ryan Zak, and Stephanie Drake); Student Leadership is Contagious” (Jackie Ewing, Kate Baumgaertel, Lisa Szyska and Tanya Fergus); “Developing an Adaptive Health Curriculum” (Laura Ehas); Using Canva to Enhance Your Lessons” (Sarah Duncan); “Assessment Strategies” (Heather Hoftiezer and Alyssa Schumer); and “Engage, Empower, Excel Your Multilingual Learners” (Tracy Fuentes).



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## News from the D75 Schools

### **"Lost Boys" present a lesson in overcoming hardship**

The two men stood in front of sixth and seventh-graders, tall and smartly dressed, wearing brightly colored blazers. It was hard to imagine them as skinny 10-year-old refugees escaping war-torn Sudan.

Yet here they were, two of the Lost Boys of Sudan, nearly 40 years after their lives were turned upside down by war, speaking to students at Carl Sandburg Middle School on Tuesday morning. Their positive message was accented by their smiles.



"It doesn't matter where you start, it's where you end that matters," said Gabriel Dut Atem, who spoke alongside Peter Magai Bul. "Any of you can be whatever you want to be. If you go through hardship, don't let that stop you from achieving your goals."

They were invited to the school by seventh-grade teacher Tracy Fuentes. Many of the students had read the book, "A Long Walk to Water," a fact-based novel about the 17,000 African boys who were forced to leave their families and their homes in the 1980s and '90s and walk for months to seek refuge. Nearly half didn't survive. The 10,000 who did survive ended up in refugee camps. More than 3,000 were eventually sent to live in the United States - Gabriel and Peter were two of the lucky ones.

[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)





## Student taste-testers help pick out next year's menu items

Students at Carl Sandburg, MG and Washington helped us by taste-testing possible lunch items for the 2024-25 school year. After sampling an item, students used stickers or placed a ticket in one of two jars based on whether they liked or did not like the food. Results will give District 75's food service provider, Arbor Management, along with the D75 Wellness Committee, some direction in forming next year's menus.



## Read Across Mundelein Week

During the last week in February, District 75 celebrated "Read Across Mundelein" week. We found creative ways to encourage reading at all of our schools.

Themes included: "Drop Everything and Read," "Hats Off to Reading," "Reading makes us bright," and "Reading is Relaxing." Students (and staff) wore hats, pajamas and jerseys from their favorite teams. Mundelein Mayor Steve Lentz took the time to read to second graders at Washington. And, in a surprise visit, the Chicago Wolves hockey mascot Skates participated in reading activities at Washington.



It was quite a week for our voracious young readers at every level.



## MHS Drumline visits MG

The staff at Mechanics Grove found a great way to get the kids excited about the Illinois Assessment of Readiness testing - they invited the Mundelein High School Drumline to entertain them and get them dancing. Thanks to the great MHS students (MG alumni included) for their energy and encouragement.



## MHS senior creates backdrop for middle school musical

When Carl Sandburg Band Director Moulee Gupta was searching for a backdrop for the school's annual musical, "Descendants," she hoped to find something special to match the enthusiasm her students were putting into the show.



"It was just about finding the right people to make the magic come alive," she said.

The right people, it turned out, were at nearby Mundelein High School. She first talked to Mundelein Theatre Director Jonathan Meier who put her in touch with the MHS Art Department staff. It turns out they had a student, senior Jaxon Wasseluk, who had painted the scenery for last spring's MHS musical, "In the Heights."

When Moulee reached out to Jaxon, he was surprised but excited.

"I hoped someone would notice what I did for In the Heights, but I didn't expect much from it," he said. "So when she contacted me about Descendants I was super-excited."

[READ THE COMPLETE STORY HERE](#)

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## *Important Dates April-May 2024*

- Tuesday, April 1 - School resumes
- Thursday, April 4 - STEAM Foundation Pizza Throwdown
- Friday, April 19 - Half-day School Improvement Day (no school at Lincoln)
- Friday, April 19 - Preschool Screening (all day)
- Thursday, May 2 - D75 Cultural Celebration
- Wednesday, May 22 - CSMS Promotion Ceremony
- Thursday, May 23 - Last Day of School, Early Dismissal
- Tuesday-Friday, May 24-30 - Emergency Days (if needed)





# Attendance Matters!



**Attendance Philosophy:** Regular attendance is required and necessary to develop the academic and intrapersonal skills needed for success in school. Student attendance is a responsibility shared by all school personnel and parents/guardians. The expectation to attend class is communicated to each student.



## **Chronic Absences**

- Absent from school 9 or more days.
- Missing only 1 day a month is the same as missing 9 days in a school year.

## **Warning Sign**

- Absent from school 5-8 days.
- Look out for attendance reminder emails and phone calls from the school.

## **Good Attendance**

- Absent from school 4 days or fewer.
- The more students are here, the more successful they become!

## **Valid Excuses for Absences**

- Illness (including mental health).
- Observance of Religious Holiday.
- Death in the family.
- Family emergency.
- Other approved situations

## **Home Conversations**

- How many days are 'too many' days to miss in a school year?
- Have you talked to your student(s) about the importance of being in school, on-time & engaged in learning?
- Have you planned out the days your student(s) may miss this year?

## **Did You Know?!**

**Illinois Law:** For students the age of sixteen and under, attendance is required by state law, which states that a child be present for five clock hours of instruction to be given a credit for a full school day of attendance. Please note, parents and guardians should closely monitor their student(s) attendance patterns since habitual attendance violations could result in legal action.



**Peter Gill**

Director of Public Relations