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IN BRIEF is published three times a year by Skokie School District 68.

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District prepares to start full-day kindergarten next year

Administrators and teachers are spending this year preparing for a major advance in District 68's early education program—next year's move to full-day kindergarten.

The move has been anticipated for years, according to Superintendent Frances McTague. The district began studying the issue in 2001, and a learning team comprised of parents, teachers, board members and administrators in 2002 recommended the district take the step as soon as it could afford the increased cost. The District 68 board decided this summer that the time has come.

District officials expect a wide range of benefits to expanding kindergarten. "The research shows strong trends that at-risk children tend to benefit from full-day kindergarten, and those benefits stretch through third grade," McTague said. Demographic trends show that the district's English As A Second Language (ESL) population is stable but sizable, and its number of low-income students is increasing.

But all children are expected to benefit from having more time in school. "We've been feeling a lot of pressure to pack everything in," said Kathy Fergus, in her seventh year as a kindergarten teacher at Jane Stenson School and a member of the learning team. "We've been doing a lot of

work on curriculum in all the content areas, and we have to work that into kindergarten as well as other grades. Sometimes you feel like you can't take time away from, say, reading, to help out when two kids are just having a problem."

But it will remain kindergarten, McTague pointed out. "It's important to maintain developmental appropriateness, and it will still be a child-centered curriculum," she said. "It won't look like a first-grade classroom."

Since 2002, the board looked at expanding to full-day kindergarten at the start of each year's budget process. "From 2003 to 2006, the answer was, 'we are unable to do it.' This year, the district has received unexpected tax revenue from reassessment of renovated properties and several existing businesses. With that infusion of new money, the board decided that we could handle the implementation of full-day kindergarten," McTague said. She added that the district's financial position will be enhanced in the near future by some anticipated staff retirements and the development of new large properties.

The move will necessitate hiring more staff, and will also require a comprehensive review of how the program will fit into curriculum and scheduling at each of

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Improved scores take OOJH off watch list

All segments of the District 68 student population have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the second consecutive year, removing Old Orchard Junior High from the academic watch list.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, schools and districts have been required to demonstrate through standardized tests that their overall student body, and clearly defined subgroups within the student body (such as those defined by race, gender or ability), achieve AYP each year. Four years ago, the district's eighth-grade special education subgroup did not make AYP in mathematics; the same was true three years ago for the low-income cohort group.

"We have been working diligently to improve those scores and we now have 90 percent of our eighth graders meeting or

exceeding standards," said Superintendent Frances McTague. She said the school instituted a remedial math program two years ago to address the problem, and also got state-funded support to better gauge student needs and improve instruction.

School officials took particular advantage of several two- and three-day "retreat" sessions to learn more about how best to use the data the district compiles about students through general record keeping and testing. Margaret Clauson, principal at Old Orchard Junior High School, said that three such retreats during the past two-and-a-half years have turned some teachers into "data gurus."

"The sessions built the capacity of teachers to really understand and analyze the data," Clauson said. Teacher teams that drew from all grades and all sub-

ject areas came to the sessions to learn how to use information to better understand the services students need and how to provide them. Teachers who attended the sessions have since shared what they learned with the rest of the district faculty.

A variety of strategies have evolved from the data analysis, she said. After examining data on achievement by special education students, the district began to include special education teachers in regular education training, and teachers worked on more ways to include special education students in regular class sessions, using materials common to all students. "It changed how people thought, and created some partnerships between regular ed teachers and special ed teachers," Clauson said.

The drive for data analysis

—Continued on next page

MAP tests begin for grades 2-8

This year, District 69 is introducing a new tool to assess student progress. The initial MAP tests—short for Measures of Academic Progress—are being administered to students in grades 2 through 8 during the second week of September.

This first round will establish a baseline for individual students. Parents will receive results at November conferences. A second round of MAP tests, given in May 2007, will then be used to gauge student progress over the course of the school year.

MAP is replacing the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-9) in District 68 schools, in part because it produces a more accurate picture of student growth. MAP can be used to track how a student progresses over time as the curriculum unfolds from early grades to high school. The tests are aligned with Illinois standards in reading, math

and science. Together with the annual ISAT exams and regular classroom assessments, MAP will provide a comprehensive picture of student performance.

Students take the MAP exams at a computer. As the test is in progress, the assessment program analyzes each student's responses to test items and adjusts the difficulty of subsequent items higher or lower. The results provide an individualized performance profile for each student that relates directly to that student's instructional level.

This year, students in grades 2-5 are taking MAP tests in reading and math in September, and again in May. Grades 6 and 7 will take reading, math and science tests at the same times. Eighth-graders will take the MAP exams only in September. In the spring they will take the Explore test for high school placement.

Meet the district's new staff members

Sarah (Sally) Abraham, seventh-grade math teacher at Old Orchard Junior High School, graduated from Wheaton College with a bachelor of arts degree. For the past seven years she has been a seventh-grade math teacher in Woodland School District 50 in Gurnee, Ill.

Catalin Eckert, morning kindergarten teacher at Devonshire School, graduated from Miami University with a bachelor's degree and obtained her Elementary Education certificate from Edgewood College in Madison, Wis. She was a teaching assistant last year at Devonshire.

Lisa Gold, first-grade teacher at Jane Stenson School, received her B.A. from Indiana University and her master's in elementary education from DePaul University. She taught kindergarten at Highland School last year.

Julie Kim, sixth-grade social studies/language arts teacher at OOJH, received her B.S. from Northern Illinois University. She taught five years in Indian Prairie School District 204; the last two years were at Still Middle School, where she taught language arts and social studies.

Jake Klipsch, Dean of Students at OOJH, received a B.S. from the University of Iowa and a master's in education from National-Louis University. He is in a master's program in educational leadership at Roosevelt University. He has been a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools for four years; last year he was a math and science specialist.



(From left): Sitting: Julie Kim, Christina Lee, Megan Weinstein. Standing: Jake Klipsch, Melinda Russo, Sally Abraham, Cyndi Stevens, Lisa Gold. Not pictured: Catalin Eckert and Katherine Sprague.

Christina Lee, seventh-grade special education teacher at OOJH, graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison with a B.S. in special education. After graduation she taught English at Seongan High School in South Korea for one year.

Melinda Russo, seventh-grade language arts teacher at OOJH, received her bachelor of fine arts degree from Boston University and her M.S. in education from Northwestern University. She student-taught at Whitney Young Magnet School in Chicago.

Katherine Sprague, fifth grade teacher at Devonshire, got a bachelor's degree from the University of Puget Sound and her master's in education at Northwestern University. She did a practicum at Stenson last year.

Cynthia Stevens, fourth-grade teacher at Jane Stenson, received a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is working

on a master's degree at Roosevelt University. She was a teaching assistant at Stenson last year.

Megan Weinstein, second-grade teacher at Stenson, graduated from DePaul University with a B.S. in elementary education, and is enrolled in a master's program at DePaul. She was a second-grade teacher at Devonshire last year.

AYP

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has spread throughout the district, Clauson said. Teachers who attended the sessions became advocates for the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) testing that begins this school year (*see box, page 2*). District officials say the process will enable teachers to focus even more on student needs and how best to address them. Said Clauson, "The best part about this is that it got people in the classroom to understand what the data was telling us."

IN BRIEF

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Board of Education meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month in the Educational Service Center at 9440 Kenton Ave. You are invited to attend.

*In Brief is written and produced by
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ECRWSS POSTAL CUSTOMER

Applicants sought for school board vacancies

Three positions on the Board of Education will be up for election in April 2007. Board members serve for four years. Applications for consideration by the nominating committee are now available at the district's Educational Service Center (ESC), 9440 Kenton Ave.

Completed applications are due at the ESC by noon Tuesday, Oct. 17. The com-

mittee will interview potential candidates on Sunday, Oct. 22, at the ESC.

The district also is looking for people to serve on the nominating committee, which will begin meeting in mid-September. Any registered voter who lives in District 68 is eligible to serve.

For more information, contact chairperson Lisa Edelson at 847-965-8460.

Kindergarten

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the three elementary schools. McTague said the district expects to have two full-time class sections at each school—but if enrollment is higher than that, some building renovation may be needed.

Administrators and teachers are not alone in their eagerness to get

full-day kindergarten started. McTague said the response from parents and community members so far has been "overwhelmingly positive." Sue O'Neil, principal at Jane Stenson, agrees. "We hope to offer our students a solid foundation to their academic careers," she said. "District 68 is being very responsive to the changing needs of our community."



Don't Miss Fall Fest

5-7 p.m. Thursday,
Sept. 14

Old Orchard
Junior High School
9310 Kenton Ave.

for currently enrolled District
68 students and their
families