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

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# Newcomer joins three re-elected to school board

**I**n the April election, District 68 voters elected one new member to the Board of Education and brought back three members for another four-year term.

The newest board member is **Amy Anson**, a family psychologist who has lived in District 68 for 10 years. She and her husband have a daughter moving from Devonshire School to Old Orchard Junior High and a daughter who will be a sophomore at Niles North High School.






Anson decided to run for the board because “the educational tasks in front of us as a district and as a society are fascinating and daunting, and I wanted to have a larger role in that dialog and to have an impact in a more systemic way than I can as a clinical psychologist. I feel that I have something to contribute from my years of research and working with schools, and I think I have a lot to gain and learn from the experience of sitting on the board and really comprehending the complexity of the mandate and responsibility of our public schools.”

Anson sees the main challenges facing the district as school financing; holding high expectations for all students while providing the support needed to educate an increasingly diverse population; and providing “an education for the 21st

century,” including technology, arts, and the character education required to make good citizens.

Members who gained re-election are:

- Board president **Hank Schneider**, who has been a resident of District 68 since 1992. He and his wife have a daughter who just graduated from Niles North and a son leaving OOJH for the high school. He is a clinical social worker who serves as Clinical Coordinator in the Outpatient Psychiatry Department at Evanston Hospital. 
- **David Beller**, who is the board vice president. He and his wife have three children, two of whom were students at Jane Stenson Elementary School and OOJH. Now retired after 30 years in advertising, he has lived in the district since 1983. 
- **Una McGeough**, who has lived in the district since 2002. She has worked as an environmental consultant for various organizations and is serving as an adjunct faculty member at Ellis College in Chicago. She and her husband have three sons, two attending Highland Elementary School and one moving on to OOJH. 

# Schools make college prep a priority

**T**he push is on within District 68 to start preparing students for college beginning in the earliest grades.

This spring, all three elementary schools in the district were admitted into the No Excuses University Network, a national network of K-8 schools committed to creating a school culture that promotes college awareness and readiness for all students, including those who are academically at risk.

“We’re joining 40 other schools nationwide that are promoting college attendance for all and are building systems within their schools to support the academic achievement of all students,” said Supt. Frances McTague. She said the program is “particularly effective in schools where there is a large demographic of families with parents who don’t have post-secondary education, or where children would be the first generation to go to college.”

The program is founded on the belief that all students have the potential to succeed academically and that schools have the obligation to help them. (*Information about No Excuses can be found at <http://turnaroundschools.com>.*)

McTague noted that Old Orchard Junior High will apply for admission to No Excuses University in the fall. If Old Orchard is accepted, District 68 would be the only district in the country with all of its schools in the network.

In keeping with the college preparation theme, the 2009-2010 school year will open with an array of college symbolism in every classroom.

Some of that symbolism is already on display at Jane Stenson School, where the “Path to College” mural was unveiled recently in the school library. The mural, completed by artist-in-residence Sonata Kazimieratiene, is based on drawings by students and constructed of tiles created by parents and other community members.

Also on the college prep front, teachers and staff from Niles North High School visited each of the district elementary schools in May to read to students and talk to them about going to college. The visits were part of an ongoing effort to build relationships between the high school and the elementary schools, said Devonshire principal Randy Needlman.

## *New special services/ECC head seeks best for kids*

**F**or four years, Jac McBride has been commuting from her home in Wilmette to her job as Director of Early Learning for Elmhurst School District 205 in DuPage County. Before that, she drove in the opposite direction to Lake County, where she was a Special Education Supervisor in Woodland School District 50.

In July, McBride will become Director of Special Services and the Early Childhood Center (ECC) for District 68, so her commute will be much shorter. That’s not what attracted her to the district, however. After more than 30 years as a special education teacher and administrator, McBride said, “I am impressed with District 68’s approach to special services. It’s based on good, thoughtful planning.”

McBride will oversee all special education programming, speech and language services, and counseling services for district schools. She will also be



Jac McBride

the primary liaison between District 68 and the Niles Township District for Special Education. She will also serve as the director of the ECC, which offers preschool, pre-K, and before- and after-school childcare services. She is taking over for Connie Powell, who retired after seven years in the position.

McBride holds degrees from California State University at Chico and the University of Tennessee. She completed general administrative coursework at Loyola University-Chicago in 2001. At District 205, she was principal for one building and special education supervisor for four other elementary schools.

Her primary goal, McBride said, is supporting the teachers and parents of special needs students, as well as our youngest learners. “We want the best for our kids—all our kids—which is as it should be. Our job is to observe, encourage, and do everything we can to facilitate their growth.”

# New boards make classes 'smarter'

One of the latest trends in classroom technology involves the use of interactive whiteboards. Teachers in District 68 schools have been piloting the devices and the response thus far has been genuinely positive.

"A lot of teachers have been coming into the library to find out how they work. They have endless possibilities, and teachers are starting to see that," said Rebecca Borree, LMC director at Old Orchard Junior High.

"The biggest positive is student involvement. Because these boards are interactive, they are automatically more engaging for kids. At the same time they present the opportunity to integrate technology into teaching and learning on a daily basis. They transform the way teachers teach and students learn," Borree added.

While they can be used as standard whiteboards, the interactive boards are also linked to a computer system, so teachers can play videos, show a PowerPoint presentation, pull in information from the Internet or display material from a lesson plan. The boards eliminate the need for chalkboards, overhead projectors, VCRs and DVD players, even traditional maps and charts.

At the same time, the boards work like giant touch-screens, enabling students and teachers to manipulate numbers, words or objects on the screen with their fingertips or by using a stylus. Teachers can use hand-held electronic "slates" to interact with the boards from anywhere in the room.

As Lisa Nimz, a fifth-grade teacher at Jane Stenson School, observed, "I like the ability to easily save and share what I've written. I can't do that with a chalkboard!"

Students can interact with the smartboards from their desks using hand-held devices. Their responses can be displayed anonymously on the board at the front of the room, allowing teachers to monitor how students are doing without calling attention to individuals. "This really engages the students and provides the teachers with immediate feedback on how their students are learning and applying the information," said Supt. Frances McTague.

For quizzes or tests, questions can be displayed on the whiteboard, and student answers and scores can be recorded by the computer. Nimz

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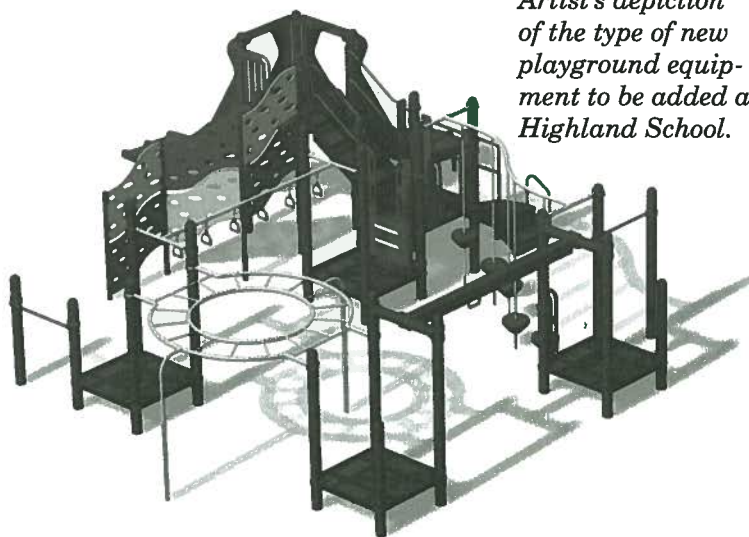
## *School playgrounds set for summer upgrades*

When students return to Highland School and Jane Stenson School next fall, they will enjoy newly refurbished playgrounds. The work, to be done over the summer, follows similar renovations at Devonshire School last year.

The project includes replacing and repainting the blacktop areas at both schools, installing new fencing, and adding trees, shrubbery and plant beds along the perimeter of the playgrounds to make them more inviting to students and attractive to the community.

Highland School is adding some new play equipment that was selected by a committee of faculty, parents and students. At Jane Stenson, District 68 is working with the Skokie Park District on an upgrade of play equipment in Sequoia Park, which is adjacent to the playground. That part of the project may be approved for 2010, according to Assistant Superintendent for Business Beth Millard.

The staff parking lot at Jane Stenson will also be resurfaced and reconfigured.



*Artist's depiction of the type of new playground equipment to be added at Highland School.*

## 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 Complete Communications, Inc. Skokie, IL.*

## \*ECRWSS\* POSTAL CUSTOMER

## Smartboards

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noted, "The feature I like best is my ability to easily and instantly assess my students using the handheld device. It allows me to pace my lessons well, and provide well-targeted interventions for the students who need it."

Interactive white boards have proved to be effective at all grade levels and for students with a

variety of learning styles.

Molly Olson, a first-grade teacher at Highland School, said her classroom piloted one of the boards "and we loved it! The interactive white-board has been an effective tool for instruction, reinforcement and assessment. We have used it for attendance, daily instruction, skill assessment and much more."

Teachers have been "test-driving" two brands of interactive white boards this spring, one from Promethean and the other from SMART Technologies. The district will select one of the systems over the summer so the boards can be up and running at the start of the next school year.

And the district's standing technology committee will continue to review new products as appropriate. The committee, made up of teachers and administrators from all school buildings, has been pursuing a goal of infusing technology into daily instruction. The district also will seek funding from the federal stimulus effort to help pay for technology.

### *A note for parents of private school students*

If your child attends a private elementary school (K-8) and you reside within the boundaries of Skokie School District 68, your *school* may be eligible for Title I funding through the federal government. Please contact Supt. Frances McTague at (847) 676-9000 so that she can contact your child's private school to discuss eligibility for this funding assistance.