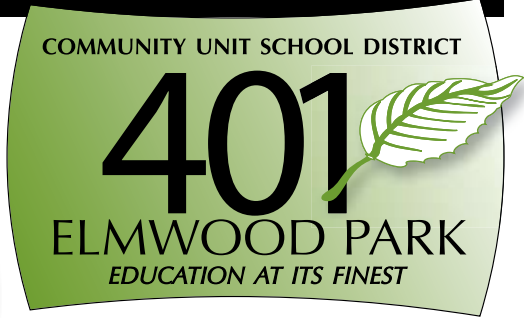


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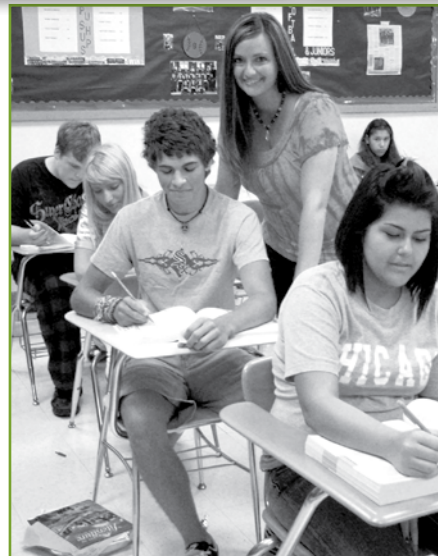
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EPHS Students' Test Scores are Highest in History

All Illinois public high school juniors take The Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). The test measures student achievement in reading, math, science and writing and includes the national ACT+ Writing Test. **Elmwood Park High School students' 2009 PSAE and ACT scores were the highest achieved in school history!** In fact, over the past five years, PSAE math scores increased by 190%; ACT (PSAE) reading by 126% and PSAE science by 144% (percentage of students who meet or exceed Illinois State Learning Standards).

The improved scores were no accident. Rather, they are the result of new EPHS educational improvement initiatives that include—

1. *An increase in graduation requirements: English (four credits from three); math/science (three credits in each subject from five combined); and writing (two credits from none). History requirements remain unchanged at three credits.*
2. *Implementation of a Reading Improvement Program to increase reading comprehension and fluency. New students' reading ability is tested each year. Those who read below grade level take this course to receive additional assistance for as long as they need it.*
3. *The ACT Preparatory Course, "Radiant Learning." The Radiant Learning Program is an ACT prep course taken during the school day by all juniors. Students take a pretest to determine their grasp of the subject, then teachers design lessons*



based upon the pretest results. The course meets for 90 minutes a day for two quarters and students receive a full elective credit toward graduation. The program alternates daily between English/reading and math preparation.

4. Focus on rigor. Each department increased its requirements for students, and teachers are working to ensure all students meet college entrance requirements.

Elmwood Park High School Principal Jim Jennings stated, "The students and teachers at Elmwood Park High School have worked very hard to improve our standardized test scores. It is nice to see the positive results of our efforts and know that our initiatives are working. Elmwood Park is lucky to have so many hard working, talented and dedicated teachers working with our students."

PHOTO: Teacher Erica Hanrahan helps Elmwood Park High School students improve English skills while preparing them for PSAE/ACT testing.



United We Read, Elmwood Park!

The Elmwood Park Schools will soon spearhead a new initiative not only for students and parents, but also for all community members. The **United We Read, Elmwood Park!** community reading event is scheduled to kick-off in early 2010. Just like Oprah's Book Club or the city's "One Book, One Chicago" program, the entire District 401 community will soon have the opportunity to read a specially selected book and share its story, message, and the experience with others.

Last spring, Superintendent Douglas Rudig approached District Media Specialist Jeane Fillipitch with the concept of a big reading event. Thrilled with the idea and the challenge, Ms. Fillipitch enlisted the enthusiastic aid of Elmwood Park Public Library Director, Shawn Strecker. The director and her staff are working with Ms. Fillipitch and District 401 teachers to plan and implement the event. *Continues on page 3*

New Administrators Bring Experience, Expertise



Three administrators are now settling in to District 401.

Joanne Mourikes is the new Early Childhood Center (ECC) principal and district bilingual coordinator. There are two new assistant principals: **Adam Parisi**, Elm Middle School and **Jim Edwards**, Elmwood Park High School.

As ECC principal, **Joanne Mourikes** sets instructional priorities for the school's academic programs. "I work closely with our classroom teachers, the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and our reading specialists to develop a school day that combines academics and social/emotional learning. I believe our mission at the ECC is to provide an entry point for families and District 401 schools to work closely together to ensure a successful learning experience for all our children," Ms. Mourikes explained. The ECC offers kindergarten classes to children ages five and six, and pre-kindergarten to children ages three and four. Currently, there are approximately 160 kindergarteners and 100 pre-kindergarteners at the ECC.

She also serves as the bilingual coordinator for the entire district, working with staff to provide non-native students the academic and social support they need to become successful in English.



An educator for 16 years, Ms. Mourikes came to the district from Prairie Oak Elementary in North Berwyn, a K to 5 school, where she served as assistant principal. Previously, she taught a bi-lingual kindergarten class and junior high Language Arts in the Chicago Public Schools. She considers her work for District 401 her dream job.

Ms. Mourikes earned a teaching degree from DePaul University and an Administrator's Certificate from Loyola University.

A Greek American, her parents emigrated to America shortly before she was born.

After college, Ms. Mourikes served in the Peace Corps in rural Costa Rica and Central America; later, at the American International School in Genoa, Italy, she taught English to Italian-speaking children.

"These experiences helped me appreciate the United States as a country that offers unlimited opportunities for all people. In District 401, we are preparing our students to take advantage of every opportunity," she said. "The entire Elmwood Park community takes great pride in being a tremendously successful school district. We have high expectations for our students and provide them with a comprehensive curriculum that aligns our educational goals with continuity from pre-kindergarten through high school. Whether a child enters



our district at the ECC, or is new to our country and enrolls at another district school, our goal is for each student to enjoy a positive social and emotional environment while experiencing academic success."

Jim Edwards brings 15 years of experience in education to his position as EPHS assistant principal. Most recently, he served as assistant principal at Morton High School, where he previously was the dean of students. He taught English and Social Studies at Chicago area high schools and also coached baseball.

"I am impressed with the district's focus on continuous improvement in the areas of curriculum mapping, improving test scores, preparing students for college, and creating a school culture that fosters responsible and proactive students. The collaborative working relationship between the administration and staff is an integral part of district's success," Assistant Principal Edwards stated. "EPHS students are respectful, hard working, and appreciate the staff that works tirelessly to give them a great education. They also have a sense of school spirit that is unmatched by any school for which I have worked."

Mr. Edwards achieved a BA in History from DePaul University an MA in Educational Leadership from Chicago State University and

New Administrators (L to R) Early Childhood Center Director Joanne Mourikes, Elmwood Park High School Assistant Principal Jim Edwards and Elm Middle School Assistant Principal Adam Parisi.

earned an Administrator's Certificate. He is a strong believer in the importance of extracurricular activities to instill a sense of pride and discipline in students.

Outside of school Mr. Edwards manages a

traveling baseball team in the southwest suburbs. His wife is also involved in education, working at St. Xavier University's library. The couple has two sons.

As Elm Middle School's new assistant principal, **Adam Parisi's** responsibilities include student discipline, scheduling, staff evaluation, supervising curricular areas and curricular clubs. Previously, he worked as a social studies teacher, P.E. teacher, coach and district leader, serving schools in Schaumburg, Naperville and Evanston. He brings 11 years of experience in education to his new position.

Assistant Principal Parisi achieved a BS in Secondary Education from Illinois State University and an MA in Teaching Leadership from St. Xavier University. He also earned an Administrator's Certificate from Aurora University.

He has been aware of the Elmwood Park schools since he was a young boy growing up in nearby Jefferson Park. "I really enjoy working in District 401. It is a great place with fabulous people," he remarked.

This year is a very memorable one for Mr. Parisi. Not only did he begin his new job, but he will wed his fiancée Marcee in December. He enjoys spending time with family and friends and traveling through Europe.

United We Read, Elmwood Park!

Continued from page one...

A goal of **United We Read, Elmwood Park!** is to involve people of all ages through an exciting, interesting book that is available in several versions for different reading levels. One such book is the New York Times #1 Best Seller *“Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations, One School at a Time,”* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. Dr. Rudig and Ms. Fillipitch both claim this book as one of their favorites. It tells Mortenson’s true story. While climbing K2, the world’s second tallest mountain, he became lost and ill. Eventually, Mortenson stumbled into a Pakistani village, whose residents welcomed him,

sheltered him, and saved his life. He promised to repay his caring hosts by building a school for the children of this remote mountain village. Not only did he build the school, but his efforts also created the non-profit Central Asia Institute that has, to date, built 90 schools for 34,000 impoverished children in rural Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The version of the book for grades K through 4 is called, *“Listen to the Wind,”* and is told through the eyes of Pakistani children.

A book for older children is also available, as are large print, Spanish and audio versions.

A committee is currently planning the event, which may include discussion groups as well as story times for young children. Community and individual



sponsors are welcome: for further information, call Jeane Fillipitch at (708) 452-7272.

Don’t miss **United We Read, Elmwood Park!** Stay in touch with the district website, local newspapers and this newsletter for further information.

PHOTO: District Media Specialist Jeane Fillipitch and students with age-appropriate versions of the United We Read, Elmwood Park! book selection.

Positive Behavior intervention and Supports Begins at Elm Middle School

Elm Middle School educators are the first in the district to implement Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a program that teaches, recognizes and reinforces students’ positive behavior. During the school day, learning time increases when it is not disrupted due to inappropriate behavior. “PBIS is a proven system for helping students succeed socially, behaviorally, and academically,” Elm Middle School Principal Kathleen Patton explained. PBIS also helps equip students with important life skills necessary for success in future working and learning environments. PBIS is currently in the planning stages at Elmwood Park High School and at both of the elementary schools. Soon, it will be a continuing, district-wide initiative, with every student practicing PBIS as they go through the schools.

Nationwide, thousands of schools have implemented PBIS to reinforce students’ appropriate social and emotional behavior. PBIS identifies what appropriate behavior “looks like” throughout all physical areas of the school; inside, outside, in class,

at lunch, at recess, in the library, in the halls, etc. Students are rewarded when they display correct behavior. All staff members are trained in PBIS and are consistent in using the same “language” to teach the behaviors. Elm Middle School educators spent the last year preparing for PBIS implementation.

On the last Saturday of summer vacation the school hosted its first back-to-school family picnic. The event marked an important PBIS objective: strengthening family/school relationships. On the second day of school, students attended a PBIS kick-off that included an assembly and a “station rotation” to learn appropriate school behaviors. Elm Middle School teachers and administrators also created a list of these behaviors, which was copied and posted throughout the school. This list reminds students of the correct behaviors in the hallway, restrooms, cafeteria, during an assembly, outside on school grounds, on the bus and at dismissal. There are four behavior categories for each school area: 1) **Respect Self;** 2) **Respect Others;** 3) **Respect**

Continues on page 4

Breakfast for Champions



Research shows that eating breakfast actually helps children learn! Because of the importance of this crucial meal, the State of Illinois has established a breakfast program for schools under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program. This year marks the beginning of the program and the first time the district has offered, for a small fee, daily breakfast to students in grades one through twelve.

Participating students now enjoy a healthy breakfast of milk, juice or fruit, muffins, croissants or other breads, and cereal. The cost to parents is only \$1.25 per day for students in grades one through eight, and \$2.00 for high school students. The breakfast is scheduled for 15 to 20 minutes in the school’s lunch area before the first class begins—no time is taken out of the school day schedule.

Interested parents who want to guarantee a healthy start to their child’s school day should contact the child’s school for more information. Also, monthly breakfast menus are posted for review (under each school’s “lunch menus” listing) on the district website: www.epcusd401.org.



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Report Identifies District's Progress

This year's annual report, the district's third, can be viewed on the district's website: www.epcusd401.org. The annual report ties into the "Educational Landscape Plan" that sets long-term goals for the district. The "Educational Landscape Plan" can also be viewed on the website.

The report shows how progress is being made throughout the district, from facilities through finances, curriculum to communication. Of special note are this year's many initiatives; they are all listed in the report.

Positive Behavior intervention and Supports Begins at Elm Middle School

Continued from page three...

Property; and 4) Be There, Be Ready.

Every day, teachers will reinforce the school's behavior expectations in their classrooms.

Each month throughout the year will be dedicated to a different behavior theme that is reinforced by weekly lessons.

On September 25, PBIS was the focus of an Institute Day session. (Institute Days are used for teachers' professional development and are non-attendance days for students.) In addition to training from professionals, teachers formulated the school's PBIS acknowledgment system—ways to recognize and reward students who meet behavior expectations—and developed a calendar of special PBIS events.

Principal Patton stated, "Students' response to PBIS has been great. Behavior is excellent, even better than usual. PBIS brings together all of our behavior efforts under one umbrella and makes it easier for parents, students, and staff to see how all those components fit together. We are excited about the potential that PBIS brings to help Elm Middle School educators continue to help our students grow."