

**GROSSE POINTE  
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

# Partners in Learning

Excellence in Education: Learning and Leading for Today and Tomorrow

Spring 2007

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## Register and enroll now for fall

If you have a student who will be attending the GPPSS next year, please call 313/432-3083 now to set up your registration and enrollment appointment. All forms and instructions are available on the district website.

## District earns Gold medal

GPPSS was recognized again as one of the top public school districts in the country by Expansion Management, a leading site location and facility magazine. Our gold medal rating means the district is among the top 16%.

## Honoring our volunteers

Each year the district expresses its appreciation to citizens who volunteer their time and effort for the programs and activities of the public schools. We are fortunate to have so many people who are active in our school community.

Recognized this year with the Golden Apple award were: Mary Brookes, Debbie Carmody, Lindy Cavanaugh, Anne Coates, Joanne Dennis, Pamela Flom, Kathy Manos, Trisha Morath, Sue Sattelmeier, John Smith, Monica Stone and Angelo Tocco.

**Grosse Pointe Public School System**  
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## Strategic plan guides district to excellence



**North's Full Orchestra and the Symphony Band both received first place ratings. The Symphony Band was also selected as Grand Champion for the 2007 National Freedom Festival in New York City this spring.**

- photo courtesy of director David Cleveland

I had the opportunity to hear Dan Gilbert, Chairman and Founder of Quicken Loans, speak to a group of new employees about their company's "ISMs in Action," and was struck with the similarity to our strategic plan's guiding principles. Hearing about another company's culture was eye-opening as I worked with colleagues to develop the progress update for our

community and Board of Education. I love the vote of confidence we see in stable enrollment figures despite the state's economy, and enviable teacher retention rates knowing how much it takes to teach each and every student each and every day in today's classrooms. Measuring and reporting our successes is extremely important

— continued on page 3

## Advance planning almost covers Lansing cuts

Budget planning is an ongoing process. Since January, the district has been concerned about the possibility of a midyear cut. As over 86% of our budget is directly related to personnel – a budget area the district is loathe to cut, especially midyear – the administration held back over \$1 million of anticipated spending.

**Our ongoing goal is providing educational excellence within our financial means**

- Waiting on budgeted technology spending (software/ hardware updates, website revisions) - \$200,000
  - Moving to a paperless requisition system - \$10,000
  - Reducing overtime costs - \$164,000
- Additional savings are anticipated in:
- Energy savings through bond projects - \$100,000
  - Small Appliance Initiative (Pay to Plug) a reduction in non-instructional equipment usage - \$40,000 annually

— continued in the box on page 3

Planned reductions will come from:

- Moving Board elections from May to November to coincide with the municipalities' elections - \$58,000

# BOARD BULLETIN

## Measuring our progress through test results and retention rates

Amidst the ongoing budget decisions, the every day business of educating our students continues. Every day, each student is being challenged. That is the core mission of the district and as most residents are aware, this district is among the best in the state.

A recent *Grosse Pointe News* editorial related the findings of a nationwide education watchdog group, *Alliance for Excellence in Education*, which compared Michigan to the nation. The editorial concluded that it was “assumed” Grosse Pointe students perform well above state averages. In order to not leave our residents in doubt, let us share some of our successes.

While students may moan about testing, tests are important in order to evaluate the teaching and learning in the district. The district’s annual MEAP testing once again put Grosse Pointe elementary and middle school students ahead of all Michigan averages. In the area of language arts, our middle school and elementary students had passing rates in the 90 percent range compared to state pass rates in the 70 percents. In math, those students performed at least seven percent (7%) above all state averages. Science and social studies put our students in the 90 percent passing range, well above the state averages.

Grosse Pointe is in the process of piloting new national testing. The current Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP4) is outmoded and does not provide a passing rate but rather a percentile. Even so, it shows our fifth grade ranking in the top third of the country in reading and mathematics.

A better indication of national ranking are student results on SAT and ACT tests. Our students beat all Michigan mean scores as well as U.S. mean results in both ACTs and SATs. Grosse Pointe is proud to have over half of our high



Board president Brendan Walsh enthusiastically thanks GPFPE President Lorna Utley for the Foundation’s gift to cover the materials of the new Spanish class for all fourth and fifth grade students.  
- photo courtesy of Brad Lindberg, Grosse Pointe News

school students taking at least one AP class AND 79% of those students pass the AP exam. Nationally, only 24% take an AP exam. Newsweek annually ranks the nation’s high schools based only on the number of students taking an AP course. Many of Newsweek’s top ranked high schools have entrance criteria and/or don’t submit AP pass rates. As a public school, Grosse Pointe is obviously doing a great job of challenging each and every student.

Other indicators of excellence in our district include the number of highly qualified teachers we employ compared to state and national averages. A highly qualified teacher is a teacher who has majored in the subject area in which they teach. All of Grosse Pointe’s teachers are highly qualified, compared to 65% nationally and 54% statewide.

Also indicative of job support and satisfaction is the teacher retention rate. Almost half of new Michigan teachers leave the teaching profession within five years. In our district, last year we had no teacher with less than five years experience leave. Our retention rate the year before was 92%.

The facts show that our students are learning and our staff is well qualified and dedicated. Grosse Pointe continues to lead the way, both statewide and nationally.

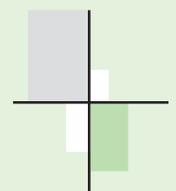
### Board Meetings

Board meetings are typically the second and fourth Mondays of the month at 8 p.m. They will be held from January through June in North High School’s library, 707 Vernier. July through December they will be held in South High School’s Wicking Library, 11 Grosse Pointe Boulevard.

Directions, agendas and additional meeting times are posted in the Administration Building at 389 St. Clair Avenue, as well as on the district website [www.gpschools.org](http://www.gpschools.org)

### Did you know?

Of seven Board members, six currently have children in Grosse Pointe public schools, while the seventh member had the last of three children graduate last year. Board members are committed to this school district and this community, in theory and practice.



## Strategic plan update, continued from page 1

and the district is working to ensure the community is aware of our progress and focus areas for improvement. Here are highlights from our progress report.

**Student Learning:** you can see curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned in success stories like our 14 National Merit Scholarship finalists and 11 commended students. Also, 90% of our graduates go on to higher education at 160 universities and colleges each year. Please see the Board Report on page two for more successes.

**Student Services/Learning Environment:** Our SAFE program wraps students and families in support, and character education programs are imbedded within social studies lessons. We now offer regular education students an extra period in math for additional support, and new middle school Honors science and social studies classes provide added challenge. Our staff is trained to make the environment safe and welcoming, so in that setting, instruction can be tailored for individual needs.

**Staff Development:** dozens of staff development options are offered in our schools each year, and 80% of our

teaching staff hold advanced degrees, pursued on their own time.

**Human Resources:** we are utilizing technology that saves money and time as we recruit, develop and retain staff who are committed to excellence, open to change, capable of strong leadership, and willing to work as a team.

**Partnerships:** close working relationships with the Grosse Pointe Foundation for Public Education, Chamber of Commerce, family center of Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods, and municipalities are examples of how we are capitalizing on the input, talent and resources of the community.

**Finance:** GPPSS is committed to being transparent in our operations and wise stewards of resources through prudent planning and skillful management. One success is the bond rating we received when refinancing the bond, saving taxpayers \$1.2 million.

**Technology:** We implemented a paperless requisition and pay stub system, and a technology assessment developed by our staff is being used as the State's template for middle school testing. — **Superintendent Suzanne Klein**

## Fond farewell to head of human resources

Lawrence J. Lobert, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Labor Relations, will be leaving the district at the end of June to accept a position in the Chicago area with the New Trier High School District.

We wish him well in the new career opportunity ahead of him. At the same time, we will say good bye with sadness as he has made many friends in our community and has done an outstanding job not only in personnel, but also in the many other projects to which he has contributed. It has been a pleasure working with him as he has

helped maintain and enhance the school district, making it an even better place for our students to learn and our staff to work.

Thomas Harwood, our current Director of Special Education, will assume Lobert's role. Harwood has experience in labor relations in previous districts, and has been actively involved in our current negotiations. Also easing in the transition will be our labor counsel Barb Ruga of Clark Hill. She has a track record of settling contracts, which we all know is in the best interest of our school community.

## District planned for Lansing cuts - continued from page 1

While the projected cuts from Lansing have ranged from \$0-240 per student, an April 30 memo from the State Budget Director announced a \$122 cut per pupil yet this year. For Grosse Pointe, that translates to \$1.1 million in the final month of our budget.

Your ideas for budget reductions and revenue enhancement are welcome as the district continues the budgeting process. Please submit them to: [budget@gpschools.org](mailto:budget@gpschools.org), call them in to 313/432-3007, or mail them to the Superintendent, attn: Budget Council, 389 St. Clair, Grosse Pointe, MI 48230.

## Natatorium groundbreaking held

May 23, representatives from the swimming teams, pool lane sponsors, local municipalities, school board, administration, construction firm Barton Malow and architect Ehresman Associates, Inc. all gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking of the natatorium at Grosse Pointe South.

Some have asked how the district could spend money on this pool project if there truly are financial difficulties. The answer is simple. The money for this project was allocated from the bond which voters approved for specific purposes five years ago. That money cannot be spent instead on general fund items such as salaries and benefits.

Reasons why the existing four-lane pool is inadequate by today's standards for a competition high school pool include:

- The length is 20 yards, today's minimum is 25 yards
- There is no room to expand to the current minimum of 8 lanes, and soon the standard will be raised to 12 lanes
- There are no provisions for diving, dehumidification or barrier free accessibility, and ventilation and lighting are inadequate.

The natatorium complex will address all these issues and is anticipated to open for South's first home swimming meet in over 36 years in the fall of 2008.

## Summer learning = summer fun

June 14 may mark the official end of the traditional school year, but learning doesn't end there in the Grosse Pointe Public Schools. The district offers a wonderful educational summer program that will enrich and enlighten your children.

New mini sessions have been added to fit into busy summer schedules. Courses that reinforce the curriculum are combined with appealing activities and are offered at all three levels.

There are several new courses being offered this year at the elementary level, middle school level, and high school level. An Introduction to Chinese mini session will be offered for elementary students as well as two Astro-Camps in the North planetarium. Ceramics will also be offered. Secondary students may take the new Forensic Science course or a Financial Fitness class. An Introduction to Chinese Culture is offered for middle school students.



High school classes begin July 9 and middle school classes begin July 10 unless otherwise noted. Most elementary sessions begin July 10. The length of each course varies.

For more information, contact Kathy Sexton in the Elementary Summer School Office at 313/432-3094, and Ranae Beyerlein in the Middle and High School Summer School Office at 313/432-3095. Email them at [kathy.sexton@gpschools.org](mailto:kathy.sexton@gpschools.org) or [ranae.beyerlein@gpschools.org](mailto:ranae.beyerlein@gpschools.org).

The complete summer school brochure and registration forms can be accessed at [www.gpschools.org/summerschool](http://www.gpschools.org/summerschool).

### Another option - Camp O'Fun

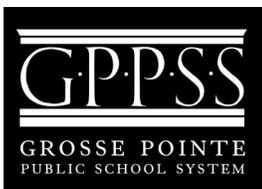
If you're looking for an active learning environment where the emphasis is on play, contact the Camp O'Fun office at 313/432-3067. By popular demand a \$45 daily rate has been added. The resident rate is \$65 for registration and \$210 per week. Call or visit the district website for additional information.

### Senior Gold Cards available

Gold Cards continue to offer Grosse Pointe senior citizens the opportunity to attend, without cost, various school sponsored events throughout the year. Free admission to athletic functions and dramatic and musical productions is our way of thanking our local senior citizens for the many years of support they have provided the Grosse Pointe Public School System. To obtain an event calendar or a Gold Card, please call 313/432-3007.

### Three DI teams go global

Teams from Trombly Elementary, Brownell Middle School and South High School advanced to the global Destination ImagiNation (DI) finals held May 23. DI is the world's largest non-athletic team competition and offers kindergarten through college students the opportunity to participate in challenging and motivating activities inside and outside their regular curriculum. DI requires hours of after-school practice and challenges students to problem solve on a major scale by using team building and creative thinking skills and presenting their solutions in a theatrical performance, all without any adult interference.



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