

Parents = Partners Education Notes

from District 64 Superintendent Laurie Heinz

Welcome to the 2018-19 School Year!

Dear District 64 Families:

On behalf of the Board of Education, administration and staff, welcome to the 2018-19 school year! We are so pleased that you are here and we cannot wait for another exciting year of teaching and learning to begin in District 64. If you are new to District 64, our goal is to support you and your children as you transition to a new school. To returning families, welcome back!



Important Information about Opening Days

Teachers have been hard at work getting their classrooms ready for the arrival of their students!

- We look forward to the arrival of smiling first through eighth graders on Monday, August 20 for a full day of school.
- Kindergarten students participate in their orientation on Monday, August 20. This day is designed to ease our younger students into school and help foster relationships with classmates and their teacher in a smaller setting. Their first typical day of kindergarten will be Tuesday, August 21.
- On Tuesday, our pre-K students and parents/guardians will have a “meet and greet” and will follow a regular schedule beginning on Wednesday, August 22.
- Our Extended Day Kindergarten program for those who are enrolled also will begin on Tuesday.

Once everyone returns, we will have more than 4,500 eager learners filling our classrooms!

New Curricular Experiences

Over the past two years, District 64’s English Language Arts Review Committee has taken a closer look at our instructional practices and resources for reading, writing, word study, and speaking/listening.

After an extensive study, the Committee recommended the adoption of a resource called *Units of Study-Reading* to support reading instruction. *Units of Study-Reading* is founded on research that supports the Reading Workshop. In Reading Workshop, instruction begins with

an explicit mini lesson that targets reading skills and strategies. Students then practice these strategies and skills in shared texts before applying them independently in their own books. Because these books are matched to students based on their individual reading levels and interests, the Reading Workshop allows teachers not only the ability to differentiate instruction, but to foster student engagement around literacy. This year, all District 64 teachers are using the Reading Workshop Model.

In the area of word study, this year in Kindergarten through grade 3, we are implementing instruction that addresses all nine areas of word study. The program is organized into short, whole group lessons with follow up work in small groups. Teachers make concepts more meaningful by studying them within books they are reading. Kindergarten and grade 1 will begin using this resource at the start of the year. Grades 2 and 3 kits will be available in late fall.

Last school year, the English Language Arts Review Committee also recommended the adoption of *Units of Study-Writing* to support writing instruction in kindergarten through grade 5. In Writing Workshop, instruction focuses on different types of writing; students make choices about what to write with coaching and guidance from teachers. In 2018-19, some teachers will participate in an early implementation cohort. During the following school year, all K-5 teachers will implement *Units of Study-Writing*.

More than the ABC's and 123's

I know I speak for our entire staff when I say District 64 is committed to educating its students in core academic areas, as well as ensuring they have access to social emotional learning (SEL) opportunities and rich experiences within our elective, encore and specials areas.

As we head into the second year of our District-wide focus on social emotional learning, SEL professional development activities will be supported by Dr. Char Myklebust, who led a District 64 Parent University this past spring. Dr. Myklebust will continue partnering with us this year, so watch for more information as the year progresses!

Our goal is to expand the four key components of SEL programming:

- *Specific Skill Instruction:* We currently use *Second Step* across the District to support students with learning critical SEL strategies.
- *Community-Building:* As a District, we are focusing on restorative practices as one aspect of community-building in 2018-19. The District SEL Committee experienced these practices last spring and a team of 30 middle school teachers and all principals participated in summer professional development on this topic. We will continue to pay significant attention to building supportive relationships, a nurturing school culture, and overall sense of community.
- *Environmental Supports:* Each school has a behavior matrix (i.e., SOARS, ROARS, etc.) that identifies common expectations for student behavior and supports positive student choices. This fall, school teams will focus on teaching students about behavior expectations and acknowledging positive student behavior.
- *Data Collection:* As we expand SEL programming, we will collect data to measure our progress and set goals. We have developed a digital system to help schools identify trends in student behavior and enable staff to address teachable moments with students. We will also use parent, student, and staff survey data to help us make decisions related to SEL.

Improvements to Our Learning Environments

We have invested over \$8.3 million in updating our learning spaces and completing other facility improvements this summer. Roosevelt received a secure vestibule, flexible learning spaces within its Learning Resource Center, and new first grade classrooms featuring interactive learning walls. The LRCs at Carpenter and Emerson also have been updated to create flexible learning areas. We cannot wait for staff and students to see their new spaces! Many other "safe, warm, and dry" infrastructure improvements and capital projects also were completed as part of our five-year Master Facilities Plan, too.

Eight Schools, One Mission

We are eight schools with one mission -- *to inspire every child to discover, learn, achieve and care*. As an eight-school District, we strive to deliver a consistent experience for our students while allowing our schools to express what makes them unique places to learn. Curriculum Night is a wonderful way to learn about your own child's school and the special things that make it a source of pride for staff and students. These are invaluable evenings -- reserved exclusively for parents/guardians -- so that you can meet with your child's teachers, gain a glimpse into daily classroom life, and find out the many exciting learning opportunities and curricular resources your child will be engaged in throughout the school year. Your principal has announced the date for this evening -- I hope it's already on your calendar to attend!

Communication is Key

To help keep all our families informed, you will be receiving our eNews newsletter regularly with District updates as well as news from the Board of Education table. You will also receive monthly newsletters emailed from your principals surrounding events at your child's school. Your school principal's website and Twitter feeds also feature an array of news and photos of learning in action. Additionally, our teachers maintain a web presence to provide a glimpse into what their students are engaged in while at school and many also share via Twitter. I invite you to become fans of our District and school Facebook pages and to follow me [@DrLaurieHeinz](https://twitter.com/DrLaurieHeinz) on Twitter, too!

We know that a strong school system depends on an informed and engaged community. We hope you will commit to keeping lines of communication open and share information, questions and concerns in real-time by emailing or phoning us directly. We are committed to responding to inquiries and providing factual information in a timely manner. Through the year, I also attend PTO/A meetings at every school and always look forward to the opportunity to meet with parents in person and discuss areas of focus across the District.

On behalf of all our teachers, staff and the members of the Board of Education, we welcome your family to the start of what we hope will be a year of learning and growth for every child. We can't wait for the school bells to ring on August 20!

Your partner in education,
Dr. Laurie Heinz

Safety is a top priority at our busy schools

With over 4,500 students entering and exiting our schools each day, safety is a shared responsibility within the Park Ridge-Niles community.



Your cooperation in knowing and following pick-up and drop-off procedures will keep all students safe as they enter and exit the building. Please watch for specific information from

your school principal and abide by building rules each and every day. We appreciate your partnership and shared commitment to student safety.

Niles and Park Ridge Police Partners

Periodically, we are asked to share Suspicious Incident reports with D64 families from the Niles or Park Ridge Police Departments. As we head into a new school year, please make sure you review with your children what to do in the event they are approached by a stranger. Also tell your child to report any suspicious activities or persons to you, their teachers, principal or trusted adults. Contact local police immediately if you feel it is warranted; otherwise, please notify your school principal.

[Click for safety tips to start off on the right foot!](#)



Good health promotes good learning

Students are in school to learn, and because they must be healthy to learn, their health is an important focus in D64.

We rely on a close partnership with parents/guardians to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all D64 children.

Please take a minute to [check out these reminders](#) about food served at school, wellness, and other health tips!

Buses are ready to roll and students are ready to ride!

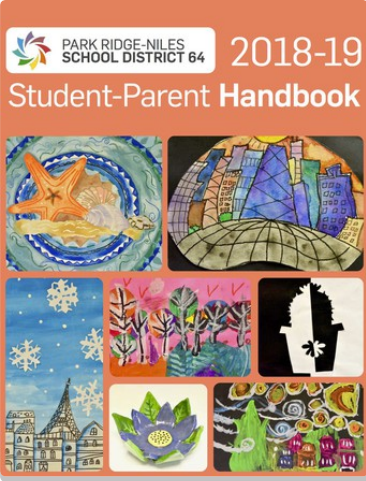
Did you know that D64 transports more than 2,000 students to and from school each day?



As the school buses roll next week, we ask your patience and understanding. Typically you can expect about a two-week adjustment period as students become familiar with the routines of riding the bus and drivers learn the students on their routes. This means buses may arrive a few minutes early or late during this period. The transportation program is set to assign a student to the closest stop to his/her home, and to average out the ridership across school routes as well as the entire District.

Please contact us immediately if there are safety issues or mistakes due to address changes. You may either: call your school office directly; email Transportation@d64.org; or phone the District office (847-318-4300). Thank you for your patience and cooperation!

All things D64 in one online publication



Our award-winning Student-Parent Handbook is designed to serve as a quick reference guide for all things District 64!

You will find day-to-day essentials and helpful health and safety information, as well as specifics on our academic programs and behavior expectations, to name just a few topics included.

Please be sure to [download or bookmark](#) a copy for easy reference during the school year.

Follow me on Twitter - [#engageD64](#)