



Community Newsletter

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Oak Grove Community,

What a year it has been! I am honored to write my first newsletter as Superintendent and highlight our experiences at OGS as we weathered an unprecedented year.

Last summer, the Oak Grove administration surveyed its parent community, and results were clear -- over 70% desired their child(ren) to have the opportunity to learn in person. It was no small feat to create a safe environment and open school doors in a matter of weeks, transforming one school into two -- Eagles@Home and Eagles@School.

The support of the Oak Grove family and the wider community was necessary to accomplish what only a few districts could do across our county and the state -- return to classroom learning in August 2020. The question was never "can we?" but instead, "how will we?" Administrators brainstormed innovative schedules and envisioned new classroom and virtual learning spaces. Teachers put students first, casting aside

any personal fears or hesitations in their return. Our Board and taxpayers (you!) contributed over \$440,000 to answer requests for desk shields, outdoor tents, temperature gauges, PPE, and staffing. Moreover, parent groups (PTO and Oak Grove Education Foundation) gave their time and monetary support to ensure the storied traditions at Oak Grove School were kept alive during a challenging year.

A school community that accomplishes great things is always unified, in sync, and mutually supportive. One that is divided can never match the success and excellence of one unified. The Oak Grove community is the exemplar and one we should all be proud to be a part of. I look forward to sharing our future successes with you and thank you for your support this past year.

In partnership,
Allison Sherman
Superintendent



Allison Sherman

Villages Honors Outgoing Board Member

In honor of outgoing Board Member, Jennifer Manski, Green Oaks Mayor and Board of Trustees proclaimed April 28, 2021, as "Jennifer Manski Appreciation Day." Mrs. Manski served on the Oak Grove School District 68 School Board since 2008, including her last two terms as President of the school board. She has always been passionate about supporting public education and carried out that passion by always striving to provide a foundational and diverse curriculum within the financial means of the school district.



Jennifer Manski

While BOE President, Mrs. Manski oversaw a 14.5 million dollar Oak Grove School renovations project, and she worked to make Oak Grove a 1 to 1 device school. She beamed with pride as Oak Grove School was honored as a National Blue Ribbon School for high academic excellence by the United States Department of Education. With her dedication to education and community, Mrs. Manski is recognized by her colleagues, school administrators, and parents as an educational leader and innovator devoted to the care and advocacy of every child at Oak Grove School.

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Teaching and Learning*

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Director of Student Services

Jennifer Barnabee
K-3 Principal

Ryan Murray
*Assistant Principal &
SEL Coordinator*

Scott Blumberg
Business Manager

District Undergoes Systems Audit

This Spring, Oak Grove School partnered with the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) to audit the District curriculum, instruction, and assessment systems. The audit examined the extent to which there is alignment between written curriculum, delivery of instruction, assessment measures, and student performance results. The study's goal was to discover the degree of alignment that exists and make recommendations that may be implemented to improve systems within these areas, and in turn, student performance. The audit assessed processes, not people, and relied on reviewing quantitative data and gathering a sampling of qualitative feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including staff, administration, parents, and students.



Findings from the audit were shared with the Oak Grove administration in late May, then subsequently with teaching staff and the Board of Education in June. Some of the district strengths and areas of opportunity include:

Strengths

- Students feel everyone cares for each other at Oak Grove; they love their school and look forward to coming to school.
- Staff are extremely dedicated and committed to the students and staff at OGS.
- Parents trust that staff has their student's best interests in mind.
- Teachers' show significant strength in their instructional delivery
 - OGS traditions, such as the 8th Grade Play and Veterans Day celebration, are valued by the school community.
 - Parents and teachers are supportive of the foundational work going on in the district around equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Areas of Opportunity

- Parents desire greater communication and training around Standards-Based Grading
- Continue to strengthen local assessment system and provide opportunities for staff to analyze achievement data to inform instruction
- Provide greater clarity around Special Education services available in the district
- Continue to strengthen administrative support for social-emotional and behavioral needs of students

The administration will be collaborating with staff this fall to develop a long-term plan to address these and other identified needs. This plan will be incorporated into the district's strategic planning process conducted in late fall by the Board of Education and administration.

School Nurse Receives Recognition

This summer, Oak Grove's school nurse, Callie Johnson, was recognized as one of the 40 Under Forty Emerging School Nurses in Illinois. Ms. Johnson was nominated for this special award by her Oak Grove colleague and received votes of approval from her nursing peers across the state. The 40 under 40 Emerging Nurse Leaders Award was established by the Illinois Nurses Foundation to highlight and celebrate young nurses who are impacting health care and the nursing profession today and who undoubtedly shape the profession's future. Callie has been a nurse at Oak Grove for six years and recently completed her School Nurse certification

through the Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University. Callie's nursing goes beyond caring for our students. She volunteers at the local health department call center, PADS shelters, and Fill A Heart 4 Kids. The Oak Grove administration, parents, and Board of Education are grateful to have Callie's expertise and leadership support through the unprecedented health challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Callie Johnson

OGS Welcomes Assistant Superintendent & Principal

Oak Grove is pleased to welcome Leslie Weber as our new Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. Mrs. Weber began her career as a classroom teacher for 14 years, primarily as an elementary teacher, moving on to become a building administrator in Oswego District 308. She most recently served in Elmhurst District 205 as a building principal for five years and the Director of Instructional Services for two years at the district level. Mrs. Weber received her Bachelor of Elementary Education degree from Northern Illinois University and her Master of Educational Leadership from Concordia University, and an educational specialist degree from NIU that she received in August of 2020. Currently, Mrs. Weber is working on a doctorate through NIU. Mrs. Weber is a wife, a mother of three, and a die-hard Cubs fan who enjoys traveling with her family, baking, and reading during her free time. Mrs. Weber states, "I am looking forward to working with the families, staff, and students of the Oak Grove learning community. I'm continually learning about the amazing families, wonderful students, and dedicated teachers at Oak Grove and feel very privileged and excited to be an Oak Grove Eagle!"



*Leslie Weber,
Assistant Superintendent*

Mrs. Jennifer Barnabee is a life-long Libertyville resident who started her career as a 3rd-grade teacher in Vernon Hills and Barrington. Over her 25+ years in education, she has worn many hats, including teaching multiple grade levels from preschool through freshmen, guiding colleagues as an instructional coach, building a Chinese immersion program, and leading district priorities as a principal in Burlington Wisconsin, Barrington, and Elmhurst. As she begins her adventure here in the Oak Grove community, Mrs. Barnabee is most excited about getting to know the people she will be serving – the students, their families, and the staff. In her words, "I am so grateful for this opportunity to learn, grow, and move forward together!" Her children, Josie (21) and Ben (20), graduated from Libertyville High School, and her husband, Jim, is a high school English teacher at Adlai Stevenson High School. Together as a family, they all enjoy playing cards and board games and spoiling their nine-year-old black Labrador retriever, Frodo.



*Jennifer Barnabee,
K-8 principal*

Ryan Murray Named Assistant Principal

Oak Grove administration is pleased to announce that Mr. Ryan Murray was named the new Assistant Principal/Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Coordinator for OGS beginning July 1, 2021. He is replacing the vacancy left by Ms. Melamed, who is pursuing advancement in her career with another district. Mr. Murray is in his third year at Oak Grove and recently served as the Social-Emotional Learning and Behavior Coordinator. Throughout his educational career, Mr. Murray has been in teacher, coach, and administrator roles.

In his words, "I will continue to put students first and strive to provide a safe and engaging environment for students and staff throughout the Oak Grove school community." Mr. Murray has three children (Carson, Emerson, and Kellan) and another expected at the end of 2021. Mr. Murray's wife, Regina Murray, is the World Language Department Chair at Woodstock North High School. As a family, they love to spend time outdoors, playing in the water, and bringing laughter everywhere they go.



Ryan Murray

New OGS Board of Education Members

Oak Grove School District is pleased to introduce two new members to the Board of Education. Please see the brief bios below for Emily Wessman Savino and Henry Liu. Both members took their formal oath of office during the April regular Board meeting and replaced the vacancies left by outgoing Board members, Jennifer Manski and Jon Baffico. We could not be more grateful for Jennifer and Jon's leadership and dedication to our students and the entire school community during their tenure on the Board.

Emily Wessman Savino is a graduate of Northwestern University and Emory University School of Law. Before moving to Libertyville, Mrs. Savino was a Senior Counsel for the City of Chicago's Law Department, practicing in the areas of local tax, consumer fraud, and environmental litigation. She and her husband have lived in District 68 for the past nine years and are the parents of current fifth, third, and kindergarten students. Mrs. Savino is excited to be a member of the District 68 school board. She hopes to continue to expand opportunities for all



Emily Wessman Savino

District 68 students, including those in the District's early childhood program. Mrs. Savino is currently a stay-at-home parent, planning to return to the practice of law in the future. Mrs. Savino enjoys spending time with her family in her free time, cheering her kids on at their sporting events, and volunteering within the community.

Henry Liu is excited to be one of the new members of District 68 school board. His passion stems from having lived in the community for the past 20 years and watching his four children grow as Oak Grove students. Mr. Liu's wife, Jen, serves as one of our school nurses, and they have four sons, ages 24, 14, 14, and 12. Mr. Liu is an anesthesiologist at Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital, where he has worked since 1998.

When not keeping up with his children's sports, Mr. Liu likes to cook, play the piano and guitar, and can also be found gardening or enjoying afternoons in his backyard with the family dogs. Mr. Liu has indicated that he hopes to serve the community well by continuing the Oak Grove tradition of excellence.



Henry Liu

OGSEF and OGEA Scholarship Recipients

The Oak Grove School Education Foundation (OGSEF) created the Soaring Eagle Scholarship in 2016 to recognize Oak Grove School alumni who are graduating from Libertyville High School and provide additional resources to support their ongoing educational pursuits. Each year the OGSEF awards two scholarships of \$1000. Oak Grove School graduates Andrew Benoit and Samantha Skarbek were selected by the OGSEF Board of Directors to receive a \$1,000 college scholarship. Andrew is an Eagle Scout, plays in the LHS Jazz Band, and is in the National Honors Society. He plans on attending Reed College or Boston University and majoring in Journalism. Samantha raised \$17,000 during the pandemic to support healthcare workers, small businesses, and underprivileged schools while also participating in LHS Swim Team and the National Honors Society. She plans on attending either University of Illinois or Indiana University and majoring in Accounting.

The Oak Grove Education Association (OGEA) created the Eagle Scholarship in 2015. The scholarship is given to an Oak Grove alum who has demonstrated excellence in academics, character, extracurricular activities, and service. The OGEA represents the certified staff at Oak Grove School. The 2021 recipient of Oak Grove's Eagle Scholarship has shown Oak Grove's impact on his high school career. In his words, Oak Grove taught him to "support and help others to the absolute extent of my abilities no matter what." Jack Regan has committed his high school career to that mantra- helping others. Jack has found ways to help others by co-founding the Fighting for Change NonProfit to raise awareness for human rights initiatives, being an LHS Green Dot leader, participating in Best Buddies, and much more. Jack excelled in LHS athletics, where he played water polo all four years. He also explored his passions through LHS activities serving as the three-year president of Scone Thugs and two year Student Council Board member. Jack is committed to his academic success at Libertyville High School and hopes to find ways to use technology to solve problems and improve the lives of others in the future. Jack will be attending the University of Southern California next year.

Facility Maintenance Plan Developed

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Oak Grove District administration, Buildings/Grounds Director, and District Architect developed a five-year facility plan. The group categorized all upcoming facility needs into four categories: Health/Life Safety (state-mandated required updates), routine maintenance and upkeep, enhancements to the campus, and various brick and mortar additions.

Projects categorized as Health/Life Safety and routine maintenance are viewed as high-priority items to complete in the next couple of years. Enhancements may be addressed if funds allow, and additional space would only be necessary if enrollment increases significantly. Health/Life Safety and maintenance projects can have a wide range in cost. For example, relocating an electrical panel to meet facility code is estimated at \$45,000, while routine replacement of boilers costs approximately \$850,000.

District administration received approval from the Board of Education to move forward with its 7.3 million dollar five-year plan during its December 2020 meeting. Oak Grove will pay for these projects through the capital improvement budget for FY22 and FY23. To cover project costs in the future, the District will consider tapping into its fund balance and other alternate revenue sources, such as purchasing bonds.

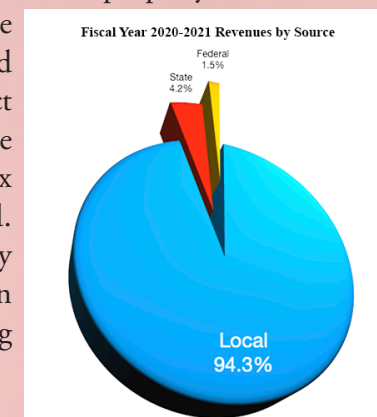
In addition to items identified on the facility plan, the District is building a sidewalk and planting a new landscape this summer to connect the village's new sidewalk on O'Plaine Road to the existing sidewalk on campus. The sidewalk provides a safe passage for students during arrival and dismissal. The total cost for the sidewalk plus landscaping is \$33,652.

Budget Update

Like all school districts across our state, Oak Grove faced an unprecedented return to school for the 2020-2021 school year. In order to open the school safely for in-person learning last August, the District incurred approximately \$440,000 in additional expenses for staffing, sanitization supplies, and other equipment to function in a safe environment. The District will offset a portion of these expenses using approximately \$268,000 from pandemic support revenue, such as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) and Lake County pandemic relief funds.

While the additional revenue sources help to offset expenses, Oak Grove is still heavily reliant on annual local tax revenue as its chief funding source to operate the

school. The chart below displays the three main sources of revenue for the District -- local, state, and federal. In FY21, 94.3% (\$17,073,613) of Oak Grove's total revenue (\$18,106,738) came from local property tax collections and registration fees. The administration is pleased to report that the District had a tax collection rate of 100% as the 2019 tax levy collection closed. The broader community plays a significant role in supporting the ongoing successes of the District.



Oak Grove Foundation Honors Teachers



*Ashley Douglass (left)
Cindy Hamlin (right)*

This year, the Oak Grove School Education Foundation (OGSEF) graciously sponsored a Teacher of the Year Award to recognize and honor one Eagles@Home (remote) and Eagles@School (in-person) teacher who demonstrated outstanding accomplishments during this unique and challenging school year.

Teachers nominated their peers through an application process. After careful consideration by the Foundation Board, two teachers were selected to receive the award; 6th-grade ELA teacher Ashley Douglass and Special Education teacher Cindy Hamlin. The award recipients were announced this spring in front of their peers by Jeff Barry, OGSEF President, and received a plaque and \$500 monetary award. Congratulations, Ashley and Cindy!

PTO Receives Prestigious State Recognition

We are pleased to share with our community that our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) received the prestigious 2020 Those Who Excel award from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Since 1970, the Illinois State Board of Education has sponsored Those Who Excel awards to honor individuals and teams who have made significant contributions to our state's public schools. The Oak Grove administration nominated the PTO for the difference they have made in students' lives and the positive contribution to the district's culture.

The administration was proud to share in the nomination application, "The PTO is passionate about our school community and consistently goes above and beyond to ensure Oak Grove students and teachers have everything they need to be successful in their learning. They are the first to volunteer their time, talents, and monetary donations to keep our school functioning at the highest level." Administration and teachers are grateful for the strong collaboration with the PTO in keeping the many OGS traditions alive each year that our school community cherishes.



8th-Grade Musical

Even a pandemic did not stop our 8th graders from participating in the annual musical. The 8th-grade class performed High School Musical Jr. during two "virtual" performances in May. The entire school community was invited to watch 8th-grade students transform into high school students -- where they carefully balanced friendships and family, maintained positive grades, and participated in sports and activities of all kinds. It was an excellent selection for our future Wildcats! Thanks go to Mrs. Ludington, Mr. Farris, Dr. Meltzer, and Mrs. Vance, who went above and beyond to keep this tradition alive in a new format!



LHS Alyssa Gillespie Scholarship

Congratulations to the LHS Alyssa Gillespie Scholarship Recipients: Sarnabh Mukhopadhyay, Sophia Thompson, Paige Vang. Scholarships totaling \$1,000 each were created for the OGS Class of 2017 in Alyssa's memory. These applicants displayed characteristics in their own life that mirrored Alyssa through her life at Oak Grove.

PTO and OGSEF Impact Widely Felt

In a school year that called for new routines and practices, the Oak Grove PTO and Foundation stepped in with tremendous support for teachers and students. The organizations donated a combined total of \$50,000 dollars toward purchases of technology equipment and academic program resources. New keyboards, computer monitors, student headsets, and OWL cameras allowed teachers to outfit their homes for remote learning and allowed at-home students to

join their peers learning in the classroom. This summer, teachers attended virtual professional development at the Teachers' College at Columbia University in New York and upgraded the curriculum to digital resources to enhance their instruction. The Oak Grove community is grateful for the significant contribution by the PTO and Foundation that lessened the burden of the pandemic, allowing continued focus on the needs of students.

Service at Oak Grove

In a year where many of our students felt the loss of socializing with friends, participating widely in afterschool activities and sports, and seeing extended family and friends, Oak Grove students stepped up to support local organizations that were also struggling during the pandemic.

In addition to the Lamb's Farm service, a group of 8th-grade students volunteered to work with our PTO to coordinate a 20 Days of Giving program to support the Libertyville Food Pantry. The event ran from mid-November through mid-December. Over this period, truckloads of different food and household items were collected and delivered to the Libertyville Food Pantry.

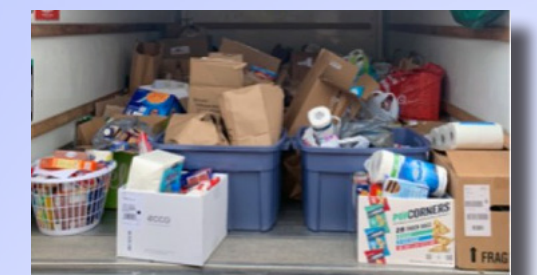
Community service has always been an essential part of each Oak Grove student's educational experience. On September 11, 2002, Oak Grove's 8th-grade students began a partnership with Lamb's Farm, providing a day of service in honor of those who lost their lives or were injured in the tragic event of 9/11. This year our 8th-grade students and teachers were committed to keeping this tradition in place, despite restrictions preventing them from going to Lamb's Farm in person.

In conjunction with our PTO, 5th-grade students spent the month of February 'Spreading the Love.' With the thoughts of community senior citizens in their minds, students decorated placemats and bookmarks, which they donated to The Sheridan at Green Oaks, bringing much-needed cheer to the residents. They also collected over 1,000 food items for the Libertyville Food Pantry to support local families. Personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves were collected by Student Council and donated to the PADS Shelter. We are proud of the work our students and teachers do to serve the community!

While there could be no weeding, bush trimming, or fence painting at Lamb's Farm, those activities and other acts of service could be performed for neighbors. The 8th-grade students thought creatively. They independently walked dogs, raked leaves, and babysat in their neighborhoods for a small fee. The money they received for performing these acts of service was donated to Lamb's Farm. As a result, the 8th-grade students were able to raise \$2,500 for Lamb's Farm.



\$2,500 donation to Lamb's Farm



Items collected and donated

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