



2020 - 2021  
School Year

## District Administration

Dr. Jason Pearson  
Superintendent

Mr. John Baird  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Operations

Dr. Seth Chapman  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Business Services / Chief  
Financial Officer

Mr. David Chiszar  
Executive Director of  
Assessment & Accountability

Mrs. Jan Geier  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Leadership (PreK-5 Education)  
& School Improvement

Dr. Denise Herrmann  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Learning & Teaching & CAO

Mr. Mark Moore  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Leadership (6-12 Education) &  
Administrative Services (H.R.)

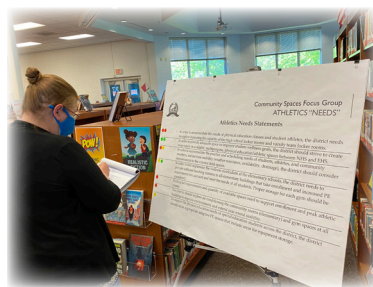
Mrs. Carol Smith  
Director of Communications &  
Community Relations

Mr. Matt Smith  
Executive Director of  
Technology

CUSD 303  
201 S. 7th St.  
St. Charles, IL 60174  
331-228-2000  
[district.d303.org](http://district.d303.org)

# District 303 Report to the COMMUNITY

## Educational Facilities Master Plan Committee

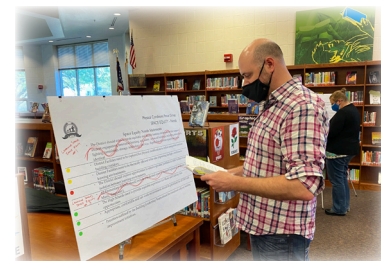


The St. Charles Community Unit School District 303 School Board believes that strong partnerships with all stakeholders ensure that students have access to rigorous curriculum, innovative learning experiences, and opportunities for academic, social, and emotional growth.

In 2019, as part of our strategic commitment to engage our families and the community, the District 303 School Board established a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to help promote ongoing two-way conversations. More than 60 people applied to be part of the committee. The School Board Committee co-chairs interviewed prospective members and chose a group of 24 individuals including parents, community members, and students to serve. Six of the members also serve in a leadership capacity on the Executive Team.

In the fall of 2020, CAC members, staff members from all grade levels, and other community members began the first step in a process to develop a comprehensive, long-range Educational Facilities Master Plan.

District 303 serves approximately 12,000 students in 16 PreK through high school buildings spread across 54 square miles. The ages of buildings in the district range from 20 years to 90 years old, which often poses challenges related to space, accessibility, maintenance, and infrastructure.



Building level teams worked with the architectural firm to create a comprehensive Educational Alignment Assessment for each school that analyzes how well the buildings meet the needs of students, staff, administrators, and community members. The assessment provided committee members with a baseline document from which they compared "best practice" planning for standards of size, capacity, and components needed to support educational and instructional goals.

The comprehensive planning included three focus group interest areas - learning spaces, community spaces, and physical conditions. Committee members had the opportunity to participate fully in one of these groups. They met more than 14 times over the course of 8 months to examine the Educational Alignment Assessment, tour facilities, and develop needs statements that provided criteria used to outline considerations the team will present to the School Board on June 14.

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## A MESSAGE From Dr. Pearson

In District 303, we continue to embrace our Strategic Commitments of Innovative Learning, Quality Staff, Responsible Stewardship, and Community Relations. Those commitments are the roadmap we use to guide our efforts to provide our students with learning experiences that are personalized, authentic, responsive, and competency based.

The 2020–2021 school year presented our students and staff members with challenges and opportunities. Forbes Magazine recently listed skills like growth mindset, continuous learning, critical thinking, resilience, flexibility, and learning in a virtual environment among the top skills recruiters want to see in job seekers. Many of those skills, along with problem solving, teamwork, and conflict resolution, also appear in the Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness Act.

Although we have faced much adversity throughout the past 15 months, our students are emerging from the pandemic with essential employability skills that will contribute to their future readiness. For example, three of the nine seniors who earned their Seal of Biliteracy, did so in languages that had not previously been recognized in our district; Teaching and Learning Practicum (TLP) students from North High School were able to intern in a remote kindergarten classroom because their teachers exhibited flexibility and worked tirelessly to find an alternative to in-person internships. Fourth grade students from Corron Elementary School partnered with North High School students to capture their reflections about living through a pandemic that will, ultimately, be archived in the St. Charles History Museum. The Family and Consumer Science teacher at Wredling Middle School rearranged the kitchens so that her students could still engage in hands-on cooking lessons. Staff members have been honored at the local and state levels for their contributions to history, health care, counseling, and community service.



Our students continue to benefit from the strong community partnerships we have with intergovernmental agencies and community organizations. The St. Charles Public Library will be opening the doors of its newly renovated space this summer and continues to run a summer reading program for students. The St. Charles Education Foundation raised funds and donated \$10,000 to the District to assist families with WiFi access.



This year, more than ever, parents have been our most important educational partners. Their ability to support their children's learning by creating quiet learning spaces, preparing their children for building safety procedures, and being open to connecting in new ways to their children's classrooms and teachers has built stronger school communities.

As we prepare for the 2021–2022 school year, we will carry with us the lessons learned so that we can not only continue to provide our PreK–12+ learners with personalized, authentic, responsive, and competency-based learning experiences, but reimagine what school and education look like in a post-pandemic world.

Dr. Jason Pearson  
*Superintendent*



## DISTRICT 303 By the Numbers



Phone Calls In and  
Out of all D303  
Health Offices  
**70,954**



Live Chat IT  
Support Sessions  
**4,050**

Number of AP  
Tests Taken  
**2,856**



Breakfasts and  
Lunches  
Distributed  
**985,622**



Support Tickets Closed by  
the D303 IT Department

**10,537**



Languages in Which  
Students Took Seal of  
Biliteracy Exams



**9**

High School  
Students who  
Completed Seal of  
Biliteracy Exams



**280**

National  
Merit  
Finalists

**9**



Vaccines Administered  
by Volunteer D303  
Nurses at KCHD Clinics

**3,451**



Twitter  
Followers

**4,637**



Facebook  
Followers

**6,793**



### Awards & Accomplishments

- North junior Natalie Lamb was a 2021 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Silver Medal Award Winner
- North swimmers Angelina Messina and Alek Filipovic, and East swimmer Molly Yetter have qualified for the Olympic Trials being held in Omaha (*pictured on the right*)
- North senior Jessica Winkates earned the Pillar Award by the Illinois Association of Student Councils
- East senior Emaira Saini was All State in Girls Tennis
- East senior Kathryn Chappel was All State in Badminton
- Members of the North Bass Fishing team qualified for state
- North senior Gus Lackner was in the top 20 for International DECA Competition



#### Journalism Students who Qualified for State

##### East

Dom DiPalermo (photo story telling)

Katie Kempff (copy editing)

Chloe Ladines (editorial cartooning)

Jeff Pape (features writing & news writing)

Quinn Sidor (review writing)

##### North

Addie Grimm (headline writing)

Caroline Look (yearbook caption writing)

Bridget Nelis (news writing)

Laure Schuldors (sports writing)

Madeline Tiedt (yearbook copy writing)



Listed from Left to Right:

**Back Row:** Mrs. Becky McCabe (Secretary), Mr. Edward McNally, Mr. Joseph Lackner

**Front Row:** Ms. Carolyn Waibel, Mrs. Heidi Fairgrieve (Vice President), Mrs. Jillian Barker (President), and Mrs. Kate Bell

### During the 2020-2021 School Year, the District 303 School Board:

- Appropriated resources such as staffing, technology, personal protective equipment, and health monitoring that enabled District 303 to offer in-person learning at all levels
- Launched the Educational Facilities Master Planning Committee
- Hired a Director for Compass Academy and a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Appointed Mr. Joseph Lackner to fill Board vacancy
- Authorized district to utilize an outside firm to conduct a communications audit



# INNOVATIVE LEARNING

## Early Childhood Students Turn Boxes into Art

Fox Ridge students in Apoorva Murthy's early childhood classroom became inquisitive of boxes after observing the custodian Mr. Adrian delivering boxes to building staff. After observing the deliveries, students asked, "What's inside those boxes?" "Are they heavy?" and "That's from Amazon!" Their wonderings soon led to an investigative study on boxes, complemented by the Boxes unit of study. The children's families donated boxes and cardboard material for the exploration. Students participated in a hands-on, child-led project in which they turned ordinary boxes into individual works of art that were displayed at the school.

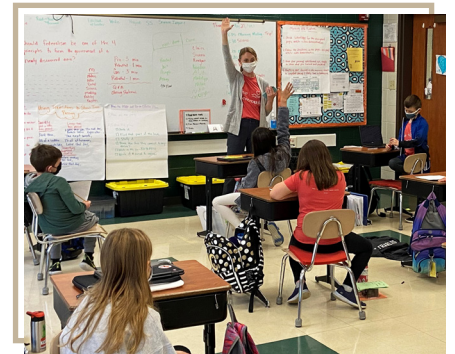


## Morning Meetings

In many households, mornings can be hectic. From getting everyone up and fed to making sure homework and lunches are packed, we know that some of the stress spills into the first part of a student's day. In District 303, many teachers begin the day with a morning meeting, integrating social emotional learning with a structure that supports a safe learning environment. Students greet each other and share stories about themselves in a way that promotes responsible decision making, self-management and relationship-building skills. The predictable schedule of the meeting helps reduce student anxiety, supports executive functioning skills, and increases engagement.

## Memoirs from the Pandemic

Students in Amanda Wojcik's 4th grade class at Corron worked in collaboration with North students in the Social Studies Honor Society on a project to document their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fourth graders benefitted from having a high school mentor to offer a social studies perspective to their work. Some students wrote memoirs or personal essays while others produced videos as a way to share their perspectives on an aspect of the pandemic. Their firsthand accounts will contribute to an ever-growing collection of historical accounts and documents at the St. Charles History Museum.



## Virtual Internship and Career Exploration Opportunities

Over 200 District 303 high school students have gained on-the-job training with internships over the last three years. The pandemic made it challenging to find virtual placements. St. Charles North High School staff members Denise Leatherman, Kandace Brink, Mike Horn, and John Peters created online experiences for students focused on career exploration. They also made it possible for four students enrolled in the Teaching & Learning Practicum

to work alongside elementary teachers, including with Kindergarten teacher Megan Oster. Through this experience, students find out if they want to explore a career in teaching. Kindergarten students benefited from the extra attention they received from the high school students and connecting with the "big kids" who go to the high school they will someday attend.

## Problem Solving as a Lifelong Skill

St. Charles East High School Technology Education Teacher Jarod Gutesha is passionate about teaching his students carpentry skills but also lifelong skills they can use whether they choose a career in carpentry or not. He has integrated the Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness Act Employability Skills, such as initiative, reliability, and problem solving into his lessons. As they are presented with a problem that needs to be solved, students use resources such as the textbook, tools, or each other to solve it and document their process in their daily self-assessment.



## Accelerate College

The Accelerate College program, in partnership with Elgin Community College, allows students to earn their high school diploma and an Associate degree simultaneously. Congratulations to this year's graduates who are part of the second cohort of District 303 students to earn this distinction - Maeve Kearney, St. Charles East; and Grace Dorrance and Anthony Palermo, St. Charles North.

## QUALITY STAFF

St. Charles Rotary presented St. Charles East High School Assistant Principal for Student Life, Lisa Dandre, with the Rotary Community Service Award for her partnership in support of the organization's initiatives such as the student exchange program, Leadership Camp, and scholarships for Career and Technical Education students.



St. Charles North High School History teacher Dr. Monica Boehle was the recipient of the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award for her work in bringing Vietnam Veterans to St. Charles North to speak with students. Dr. Boehle was nominated by VFW post 5036.



Annually, the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (INSPPRA) honors people in school districts who have supported communication in their districts. This year, Health Services Department Chair Juanita Gryfinski, RN, MSN, MS, MA, PEL-CSN, NCSN was recognized with an Award of Excellence for her tireless efforts to provide health related information to our community during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Megan Gow, Guidance Counselor from St. Charles North High School, won the Student Support Personnel category at the Kane County Regional Office of Education Educator of the Year Awards Ceremony.



In March we launched a podcast called Voices of D303. Each week, Dr. Pearson speaks with students about their achievements and contributions to our community, and staff members about programs and curriculum that makes District 303 a special place to learn and work. Podcast episodes can be found on our District website under the News tab or wherever you access your podcasts.

## RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

The Educational Facilities Master Planning Committee will present the needs statements and considerations they developed to the School Board at its regular meeting on June 14. The timeline for implementation and funding of projects lies with the School Board. District 303 is in a strong financial position and, in the current economic climate, upgrades to district facilities will result in a good return on investment.

There are several funding options available to the School Board.

### *Use a portion of the Fund Balance*

- A portion of the District's fund balance could be used to pay for some of the improvements
- Based on calculations from audited financials for fiscal year 2020, District 303 could use approximately \$20 million from the fund balance and continue to maintain the reserve amount of 28-34% (Board Policy 4:20 Fund Balances)

### *Annual Budget Allocation*

- Since the School Board is developing a long range plan, funds could be allocated within the annual budget to cover a portion of the improvements
- Current allocation for capital improvements is approximately \$3 million and could increase to assist with non-urgent projects

### *Non-Referendum Debt*

- The District is proud to be one of the least leveraged (debt to revenue ratio) districts in the State of Illinois
- This may be an optimal time to consider issuing additional non-referendum debt while interest rates are at historic lows
- Rising construction costs (materials and labor) make deferring necessary capital improvements more expensive in the long run
- Should the District wish to issue additional non-referendum debt during the 2021 tax levy process, it would yield approximately \$21-22 million in additional funding for upcoming capital projects

### *Referendum Debt*

- If the School Board decides to take on projects that cost more than the above solutions, the District could go to referendum and seek voter approval
- The School Board has nearly 90% of its available capacity and could fund all necessary projects through a referendum process
- If a successful referendum occurred, tax increases would soon follow
- This scenario would take a significant amount of resources, time, and energy. It is also something that would not be done unless absolutely necessary



## COMMUNITY RELATIONS *District 303 Students Help During the Pandemic*

### Elementary Students Collect Items for Local Charities

The elementary school students in District 303 have historically given back to the community through service projects. We are proud of the students who planned and promoted food and personal item drives to benefit those in need. Corron 5th graders saw how the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted families and decided to help others. They held a school-wide food drive that resulted in the collection of over 1,800 food items that benefited Food For Greater Elgin. Norton Creek Student Council members also collected household items for The Salvation Army pantry such as toilet paper, soaps, baby wipes, diapers, and cleaning supplies.



### Middle School Students Support Global and Local Organizations

Both District 303 middle schools have Service Learning classes where students regularly participate in community service projects. This year, students found creative ways to give back. Wredling students hosted a book drive for orphanages around the world, packaged meals for Feed My Starving Children, wrote letters to servicemen and women, and decorated their teachers' doors to boost their spirits. Thompson students turned old t-shirts into over 100 tug toys for the Anderson Animal Shelter, participated in RAM's Random Acts of Kindness week by writing thank you notes to bus drivers, writing letters to veterans, and creating kindness rocks to place around the community.



### Burger Battle Raises Funds for Illinois Special Olympics

In an annual tradition, business students from both high schools created delicious burger recipes that the chefs from Colonial Cafe grilled up for patrons. Two teams from East and one team from North created marketing campaigns filled with colorful photos, cute slogans, and a call to action in hopes of being the winner. At the end of the night, The Big Pig from St. Charles East was the winner! The event raised \$500.00 for the Illinois Special Olympics.



### Remote Students Raise Money for Wells

Remote students from Anderson, Bell Graham, Ferson Creek, and Norton Creek in Kerri Johnson's 5th grade class helped raise over \$1,000 for "Water For South Sudan," an organization dedicated to providing the people of South Sudan access to clean, safe water. As a part of the Ecosystems Unit, students learned about the lack of access to clean water to over 1 billion people across the world, especially people living on the African continent.



**CUSD 303**

201 S. 7th St.  
St. Charles, IL  
60174

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# COMPASS ACADEMY

## Opens in Fall 2021

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Fall 2021 will bring the launch of Compass Academy, our new competency-based high school program housed at the Haines Center. Compass Academy is designed to promote student creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. This personalized and responsive learning environment will allow for more choice, offering multiple modalities for learning in self-selected pathways that prepare students for college, career, and future readiness. Instructional experiences will include online, blended, face-to-face, project-based, and career embedded learning options.

Compass Academy is the first school in Illinois to receive a waiver from the Illinois State Board of Education to utilize competency-based education outside of the schools who participated in the pilot program. With the flexibility to address learning based on competencies rather than traditional course based pathways, students will apply and transfer content and skills, while building proficiency in both academic and personal success skills, across content areas.

Work-based and experiential learning will be a critical aspect of a student's educational experience at Compass Academy, and will assist in the connection of learning to the community and world around them as a way to prepare for college, career, and life. This connection will be facilitated by encouraging projects that have authentic applications, inviting industry professionals into the school throughout the year, and creating internship experiences for students that ultimately lead to their employability and future readiness. Compass Academy will not only build student agency and empowerment, but will also inspire possibility.

