

# FOCUS

Spring 2016

*A Newsletter for the District 303 Community*

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## D303 Middle School Buildings: Is it Time to Upgrade?

### BOE prefers reduction to two middle schools

In the coming months, the District 303 Board of Education will look at a wide-range of options to address existing needs of the District's middle school students. The Board made the decision to address the middle schools as a result of the community meetings regarding facilities options conducted during the fall.

This decision was made because D303 middle school buildings have the greatest needs of upgrades that would directly benefit student learning.

In January the Board decided to keep all 12 District 303 elementary schools open and that the priority at this time is to equalize the educational experience across the District for all middle school students. The specific issues are: lack of air conditioned classrooms at Haines and Thompson; science labs in need of modernization; small cafeterias which lead to scheduling issues; and aging mobile classrooms at Haines.

The first decision by the Board in this process is their expressed desire to go from the current three middle schools to two middle schools. Closing Haines Middle School would result in an estimated savings of \$2.4 million per year.

The next decision will be investigated by the Board over the coming months. That decision is to determine how the reduction from three schools to two will look.

Options include: using existing funds to make basic upgrades at Wredling Middle School and Thompson Middle School; using existing funds to make basic upgrades at Wredling and significant upgrades at Thompson; seeking community approval to do either a major renovation or complete rebuild of Thompson and also upgrades at Wredling.

The Board will be weighing these options carefully in the coming weeks with the intention of eliminating the disparity in the educational environment that currently exists in the District 303 middle schools.

### Come to the D303 Summit on Middle Schools

Attend Any of the 3 Meetings:  
April 14 at Thompson Middle School  
April 18 at Haines Middle School  
April 21 at Wredling Middle School  
**All Meetings 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**





## Superintendent's Message

### Meeting the educational needs of our middle school students

At the beginning of this school year, District 303 Administration presented to the community information about the declining enrollment in our schools. The question presented at the time, and the question that remains is- Do we want to use the decrease in enrollment to capture operational savings? In addition, is there an opportunity for us as a community to make improvements due to the expiration of bonds in 2018?

During those presentations, it was explained that the biggest operational savings, while still having enough room for students, would come from closing a middle school. The operational savings would be about \$2.4 million per year.

Based on feedback collected last fall, the community expressed the desire to address middle school building issues, but not by moving 6th graders into the elementary schools. In their current forms, both Haines and Thompson are wonderful, high-performing middle schools. This is because parents send their kids to school ready to learn, and the staff at both schools are dedicated to producing student success.

However, both the Haines and Thompson buildings have shortcomings that need to be addressed; such as science labs in desperate need of upgrades, and aging mobile classrooms at Haines. In addition, every District 303 school has air conditioned classrooms except for Haines and Thompson.

The fact of the matter is, in a District that takes pride in working to provide a top quality educational experience for all students, the experience for middle school students varies depending on which of the three middle school buildings a student attends.

As a community, we are approaching a window of opportunity to correct this, while also capturing operational savings. We can also realize a reduction in the portion of your property taxes that provide for the education of students in District 303 when some existing bonds will be paid off in 2018.

In the coming months the Board will discuss exactly how all this will look and will arrive at more exact solutions.

*That's what I think; let me know what you think.*

**Donald D. Schlomann, Ph.D.**

District 303 Superintendent of Schools

[Donald.Schlomann@d303.org](mailto:Donald.Schlomann@d303.org)

## Board of Education Update

### Notable Recent Actions by the Board of Education

**Abatement of Debt Service Levy for the Year 2016-**The District 303 Board of Education approved a tax levy resolution at the March 2016 meeting which will abate \$580,000 to the taxpayers of District 303. Four years ago, the Board made a commitment to forgo the full levy to which the District is entitled by law and abate a portion of the levy while at the same time maintaining the high standard of education available to the students of the District.

In total, the BOE has abated \$6.0 million over the last four years. It is estimated these four years of abatement has saved the owner of a \$300,000 home a total of \$670.

**Agreement between District 303 and St. Charles Park District for Operation of Norris Recreation Center-** At the December meeting of the Board, an Intergovernmental Agreement with the St. Charles Park District was approved which will transfer management and fiscal responsibility for the Norris Recreation Center to the Park District. The Park District Board approved a similar measure on December 8. The agreement goes into effect on July 1, 2016 and is renewable on an annual basis.

**2016-17 School Calendar-** The Board approved the 2016-17 School Calendar, the First Day of School will be Wednesday, August 24, 2016. Winter Break is December 19, 2016 - January 2, 2017. Spring Break is March 27-31, 2017. The last day of school is Tuesday, June 6, 2017 as long as no emergency days are used during the 2016-17 school year. The latest possible school day is Tuesday, June 13, 2017.



# BOE Approves Boundary Adjustments

Last fall, during the community-wide discussion about School Facilities and declining enrollment in District 303, one topic of conversation was adjustments to school boundaries.

At their March meeting, the Board of Education approved two elementary school boundary changes which will go into effect starting with the 2016-17 school year.

**1** In the Thornwood subdivision in South Elgin, Planning Areas 1423 and 1431 that are currently assigned to Ferson Creek Elementary will be changed to the Corron Elementary attendance area. Elementary students currently attending Ferson Creek from Planning Areas 1423 and 1431 have the option of remaining at Ferson Creek if transportation to and from Ferson Creek is provided by their parent or guardian.

*This change eliminates the need for students who can walk to Corron to take the bus to Ferson Creek.*

**2** Planning Area 1069 (South end of Deer Pond Drive in Deer Pond Estates) that is currently assigned to Wild Rose Elementary will be changed to the Ferson Creek Elementary attendance area.

*This change reflects where the students in this area already attend school, due to intra-district transfers.*

At the March Board of Education Business Services Committee meeting, a boundary change proposal to move the Anderson Elementary attendance area East of the Fox River, which is currently assigned to St. Charles East H.S., to the St. Charles North H.S. attendance area was discussed. (The Anderson Elementary attendance area East of the Fox River would still be assigned to Wredling Middle School.) Students in the Anderson Elementary attendance area already attending St. Charles East would have the option of continuing to attend East H.S. with transportation provided by District 303.

This change, if approved at the April Board meeting, would go into affect with the start of the 2017-18 school year.

To view District 303 school boundary maps, visit [www.d303.org](http://www.d303.org) hover your cursor over "About Us" and select "Attendance Boundaries" from the drop-down menu.

## Kick-a-Thon Raises \$82,000 to Kick Cancer

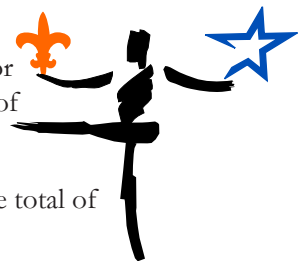


### Event Closing In on \$1 million Raised In Total

This summer, the Drill Teams at St. Charles North H.S. and St. Charles East H.S. will begin to raise money for the 23rd Annual Kick-a-Thon. Based on past performance, 2016 should be the year the teams take the total of money raised in this event over the \$1 million mark.

The teams announced in December that the 2015 Kick-a-Thon raised \$82,522 to kick cancer. That brings the total of money raised over the lifetime of the event to \$966,552.

Kick-a-Thon 2016 will take place at halftime of the East vs. North football game. This year's game will be played at St. Charles North H.S. on Friday, September 16. Fundraising events supporting Kick-a-Thon begin during the summer.



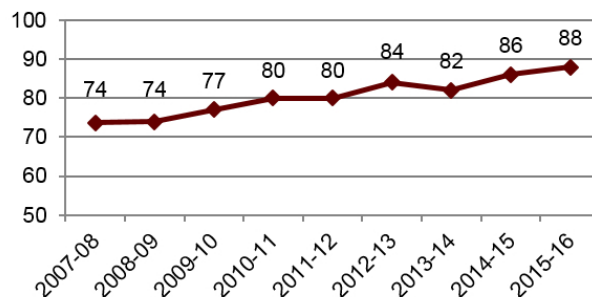


# D303 Parent Survey Records All-Time High

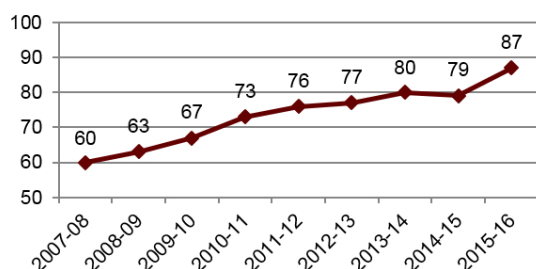
## Parent Satisfaction with High Schools Jumps Eight Points

St. Charles Community Unit School District 303 recorded its highest mark ever in parent satisfaction during the annual District 303 Parent Satisfaction Survey. Of the 2,504 responses to the survey, 88% said they were either “mostly” or “very” satisfied with their child’s school. This year’s level of parent satisfaction topped the previous highest mark of 86% which was recorded in 2014-15. The number of responses to the survey was the second-highest total since the survey began in 1992-93 and is the fourth time in the last seven years District 303 has reached a new high mark in parent satisfaction.

### District Percent Mostly/Very Satisfied



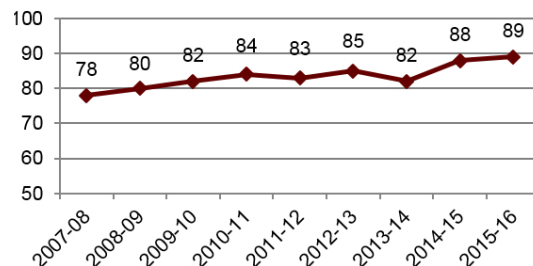
### High School Percent Mostly/Very Satisfied



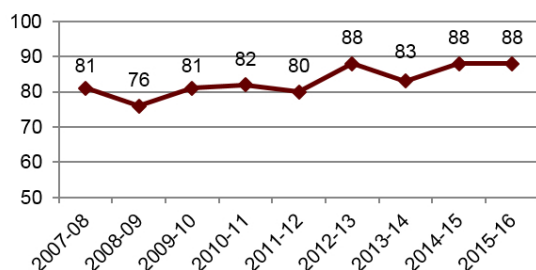
District 303 received its highest mark ever in parent satisfaction at the high school and middle school levels, and matched the highest mark at the elementary level. At the high school level, 87% of parents who responded said they were “mostly” or “very” satisfied with their child’s high school. That mark topped the previous high of 80% recorded in 2013-14. This year’s high school satisfaction mark of 87% is an eight-point increase from last year.

The middle schools in District 303 also received their highest satisfaction score with 89% of parents saying they were “mostly” or “very” satisfied with their child’s school. The previous high mark was 88% in 2014-15.

### Middle School Percent Mostly/Very Satisfied



### Elementary Percent Mostly/Very Satisfied



The elementary schools matched their highest mark ever by recording their second straight score of 88%. That is the score District 303’s elementary schools have received from parents responding to the survey in three of the last four years.

“We thank all the parents who took time to complete the survey,” said Dr. Donald Schlomann, District 303 Superintendent of Schools. “While this is not a scientific survey, the high volume of responses brings us a valuable amount of data, especially when parents take the time to add additional comments. I read every comment that is generated by this survey.”

The survey was conducted through District 303’s website [www.d303.org](http://www.d303.org) during the week of December 7-16, 2015. All District 303 parents were asked to fill out a survey at the proper grade level for each of their children who attend District 303 schools.

## World Class Talent



*Austin Kleba, Sophomore at St. Charles North H.S.*



*Austin Kleba along with long track coach Eric Cepuran at the World Junior Olympic Championship in Lillehammer, Norway.*

### Injury opens door of opportunity for North H.S student

St. Charles North H.S. Sophomore Austin Kleba loved playing hockey, but hockey gave him the cold shoulder- literally. Maybe that's a good thing because Kleba has gone from being an outstanding hockey player to a world class athlete in another sport.

While hockey took Austin to exotic outposts such as Carol Stream, Glen Ellyn and Crystal Lake, serious shoulder injuries ended dreams of a hockey career. There was one aspect of his game as a hockey player that helped him stand out from the time he started playing at three years old. "I was always one of the fastest skaters in my age group," Austin said. "Right before I dislocated my shoulder for the last time playing hockey, I broke the camp record for skating speed."

However, it was around that time his doctor, as politely as he could, suggested that Austin shouldn't play hockey any longer. It seemed natural that Austin try speed skating prior to his freshman year at St. Charles North. Maybe in the movie version of this story success would be immediate, but the truth is it took a little while.

"For the first three months of speed skating, I was just trying to have fun. It was a lot different than hockey and to tell you the truth, I was not very good," Austin remembers. Then came a trip to Salt Lake City in March 2015 and Austin posted the second-fastest 500-meter time in the world for his age group. That caused the competitive fires that once burned in hockey to be reignited in speed skating.

Austin became a national age group champion at 500, 1000, and 1500 meters and now he's travelling to compete in places like Lillehammer, Norway and Changchun, China as a member of the U.S. National Junior Speed Skating team. He has dreams of competing in the Olympics and is targeting the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing. "It takes physical and mental maturity to compete at that level. Our sport is dominated by athletes in their early 20's so 2022 is more realistic than 2018."

Between now and then there's also the matter of school work. "The teachers at North are really cooperating and helping me. They set me up with work that I can do during the car rides to training sessions in Milwaukee, and that I can also take with me overseas."

Someday soon those same teachers may be remembering when they had a future Olympian in their classroom.



# Q & A with North H.S. Music Teacher Mr. John Wojciechowski

## “Wojo” Released a Jazz Album Titled “Focus”

**How did you find the time to record an album while also being a full-time teacher?**

It's all about time management and you have to be focused. The ability to compartmentalize is essential.

**Is there a benefit to your students in the fact that in addition to being a music teacher, you are also a music performer?**

Absolutely. By playing at a professional level, it keeps my musical senses heightened and I can relate a professional standard to my students.

**Any thoughts of giving up teaching to become a full-time performer?**

Here is the most important thing for you to know. Jazz recordings make up about 2% of all music sales. For as great as Wynton Marsalis is, he can probably walk into a grocery store without too much of problem. I like what I'm doing now; teaching, playing music with other adults and performing. I do have to say “no” to a lot of performance requests, but I'm very happy where I'm at.

**What is your advice to any student who would like to become a professional performing musician?**

You had better start practicing, and take advantage of the time available to you when you are able to practice. One of my elders in music puts it perfectly, “Do the grunt work when you're young.” I don't think kids realize how busy they will be and how difficult it is to find time to practice when you become an adult.

To learn more about Mr. Wojciechowski's music and hear samples of his songs, visit [www.jwojojazz.com](http://www.jwojojazz.com).



## News From the St. Charles Education Foundation



*District 303 2015 graduate Paul Belignon  
alongside his VEX Robot Kit.*

The St. Charles Education Foundation has donated over \$1.3 million in grants and scholarships to D303 students since 1992.

Each year the money we raise funds a variety of grants that are awarded throughout the district.

Our high schools have received high tech equipment that is being used in the PLTW programs to prepare our future engineers, designers and architects.

### Support The Foundation — Honor a Teacher Through the Tribute Program

What better way to remember a teacher or staff member at the end of the school year than with a donation given in their name through the Tribute Program. Donate \$10 or more at the foundation's website or complete a donation form at your school's office. The honored person will receive an attractive card with your personal message. The donation amount is kept confidential and is tax-deductible.

### The Education Foundation Needs You



To continue and grow the Foundation needs new board members. Your ideas, your connections, your passion for excellence in education. Learn more about our mission and how you can be involved.

Visit: [www.stced.org](http://www.stced.org)  
email: [communications@stced.org](mailto:communications@stced.org)

For more information on joining our board  
contact: President, Deborah Mulrooney  
630-945-5240



# 2016 Distinguished Alumni

The three newest members of the District 303 Distinguished Alumni were inducted into the District 303 Hall of Fame on Saturday, February 20 during the St. Charles Education Foundation's Jazz Event. The award is given to nominees who graduated from District 303 and have demonstrated a high level of achievement in their field of endeavor or in their contributions to their community.

The 2016 recipients are Melissa Hefferin Berquist, Susan Clancy Boles, and James Cooke.



**Melissa Hefferin Berquist** (St. Charles H.S. '97) Dr. Berquist is currently the Associate Director of the Institute for Infectious Animal Diseases at Texas A&M University. She earned her bachelor of sciences degree from Northwestern and her doctorate from the University of Maryland's School of Medicine. Dr. Berquist's professional history includes work with biodefense research sponsored by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



**Susan Clancy Boles** (St. Charles H.S. '83) Judge Boles is currently Chief Judge for the 16th Judicial Circuit, Kane County. She earned her bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt and her law degree from Valparaiso University. She was appointed associate judge in 2007 and then in 2009 was appointed as a circuit judge. Judge Boles is only the second woman to serve as Chief Judge in Kane County.



**James Cooke** (St. Charles H.S. '72) Mr. Cooke is an attorney in St. Charles specializing in real estate, business, estate and tax planning areas. He has an extensive resumé of community service in St. Charles. Mr. Cooke was elected to the St. Charles Park District Board of Commissioners in 1985 and is currently treasurer for the Park Board. Mr. Cooke has also served as Chairman of the Fox Valley Red Cross, Chairman of the Kane County Bar's Real Estate Section, and as a member of the Kane County Historic Preservation Commission.

Do you know someone that you feel deserves to be nominated? Submit a nomination to Jim Blaney at [jim.blaney@d303.org](mailto:jim.blaney@d303.org).

## D303 Communications

Community members can be notified of District 303 and other Fox Valley announcements by visiting the Community Backpack, ENews, Facebook, Twitter, District Website or download the District 303 App.



### COMMUNITY BACKPACK

The Community Backpack is frequently updated with events happening from non-profit organizations, intergovernmental agencies and business partners from the entire Fox Valley Area.



### ENEWS

The District ENews is sent out weekly via email. The ENews contains information regarding Board of Education announcements, schools events, school calendar events and much more. Visit the District website under "News" and subscribe to the Newsletters you would like to receive.



### FACEBOOK & TWITTER

Like the District Facebook page St. Charles District 303 or follow us on Twitter at @StCharlesD303.



### DISTRICT APP

The District 303 Mobile App is available for free download for Apple and Android devices. Search CUSD 303 in the App Store or Google Play to download the app.



### DISTRICT WEBSITE

Visit the District website at [d303.org](http://d303.org).

## ECRWSS Postal Patron

Please note: Because District 303 mails its publications by postal route, some individuals who do not live in District 303 may receive this mailing.

## Calendar of Events

### APRIL

- 11** Board of Education Meeting  
Administration Building
- 15** Elementary School Parent/Teacher Conferences

### MAY

- 9** Board of Education Meeting  
Haines Middle School
- 27** Last Day for Students if no "emergency days" used

- 29** Graduation Ceremony  
Sears Centre, Hoffman Estates

- 30** Memorial Day holiday

### JUNE

- 13** Board of Education Meeting  
Administration Building

### AUGUST

- 24** First Day of school 2016-17

