



## District 23 to Convert to Grade Level Centers this Fall

In January, the Board of Education voted unanimously to reconfigure the District's three elementary schools to Grade Level Centers (GLC's) by the start of the next school year.

Beginning in August, all students in the same grade district-wide will attend the same school. Early Childhood programs, kindergarten, and first grade will be housed at Eisenhower School; grades two and three will be at Ross, and all fourth and fifth graders will attend Sullivan.

In 2011 - 2012 the GLC format is expected to save District 23 over \$400,000 annually. Over a three-year period, the savings are expected to add up to \$1 million. Having all students in a grade in one school allows for a much more efficient staffing plan. In fact, the District will be able to reduce at least six full-time positions including speech, gifted, bilingual, TPI, and reading teachers.

In addition to the cost-saving

benefits, GLC's solve the issue of inequities in class size. Under the plan, class sizes throughout the District will be uniform.

Facility utilization also will be maximized. Bathrooms, playgrounds, libraries, gymnasiums, and technology in each building can be tailored to fit the needs of one particular age group. GLC's increase the opportunities to match students to teachers according to learning and teaching styles. The reconfiguration will also increase gifted programming and the mainstreaming of special education populations. It will also afford larger peer groups for social activities and students will develop more friendships thus making it easier to transition to MacArthur Middle School.

Dr. Gregory Guarrine, Superintendent of District 23, expects educational enhancements with this plan. "Students will reap the benefits of a cohesive curriculum," he said.

"We no longer will have disparities between buildings but consistent, coordinated offerings for all students. This means greater collaboration between teachers and targeted professional development and mentoring."

The concept of Grade Level Centers was researched by District officials in the past. In fact, a feasibility report was compiled in 2003. The idea was revisited last year by the community groups who participated in the "Cut a Million Project." From there, the administration conducted a thorough cost analysis and study on all aspects of the change including curriculum, facilities, social and emotional impact, staffing, and transportation. Seven options were presented, a town hall meeting was conducted, and public input was sought before the final decision was made by the Board.

The Board of Education is establishing a Grade Level Center Transition Committee. If you would like to join, please contact the Board of Education via their e-mail address at [boe@d23.org](mailto:boe@d23.org). •

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## Look for a Referendum regarding District 23 on the April 5 Ballot

The April 5, 2011, ballot will include a question regarding increasing the tax rate to balance the Education Fund for Prospect Heights District 23 elementary schools.

*How much is the referendum request?*  
\$0.35 (35 cents) increase in the tax rate (from \$2.108 to \$2.458).

*How will this impact property tax bills?*

For the 2010 levy year, the approximate amount of additional tax for a single-family residence having a fair market value of \$100,000 at the time of the referendum is estimated to be \$35.

*Why does District 23 need a referendum now?*

District 23 relies on property taxes and local sources for 87% of revenue. Collection rates of property taxes recently fell from 98% to 94% thus reducing cash received by several hundred thousand dollars.

Despite budget cuts and fee increases, District 23 is not generating enough revenue to support programs and services.

The State of Illinois is behind in mandated payments and will owe District 23 \$960,000 for the current school year.

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# The School Scene

Breaking News

The Schools of Prospect Heights District 23

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## PROSPECT HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT 23

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The Illinois tax cap law has limited property tax increases to an average 3.2% per year over the past five years while expenditures have risen by approximately 34.15%.

District 23 continues to spend down reserves to cover deficit spending.

### What will happen if the Referendum fails?

Elimination of non-mandated programs including Gifted, Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Interscholastic Sports, After School Activities, Spanish, Industrial Technology,

Physical Education, Art, General Music, Computer Classes, and Kindergarten. Additional student fees. Higher student-to-teacher ratios in classrooms. Lower property values.

### In dollars, how much money will this provide District 23?

A community meeting will be held on Monday, March 14, at the MacArthur Little Theater at 7 p.m. to discuss in detail how much money will be generated and the impact on the taxpayer. The meeting will conclude with a question and answer session. •

### REFERENDUM FAST FACTS

- District 23 has not had an increase in the Education Fund by means of a referendum since 1987. All surrounding school districts have passed a referendum in the past five years.
- Cook County School Districts Proposing Limiting Rate Increases on the April 5 ballot in addition to District 23:  
District 31 – Northfield  
District 39 – Wilmette  
District 97 – Oak Park  
District 145 – Oak Forest  
District 208 – Riverside-Brookfield
- The Board of Education has cut almost 15%, or approximately \$3 million, from the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 budgets in addition to the \$1 million cut in prior years.
- Approximately 35% of your current property tax bill is distributed to District 23 based upon the 2009 Tax Levy Year (approximately \$18 million). *Source: District Audit for the Year ended 6/30/10.*
- Other revenue streams for District 23:

9.6% from State sources (approximately \$4 million). 3.3% from Federal sources (approximately \$1 million). *Source: District Audit for the Year ended 6/30/10.*

Because current reserves are being used to cover deficit spending, the District has less than the minimum 25% reserve requirement called for in the financial planning principles. Late last year, the Board of Education had to approve Tax Anticipation Warrants because of the likelihood that payroll and a bond payment would be missed due to large receivable balances from the State and County. At the last minute, the County released some District funds and the warrants were not issued, saving the District from the interest and fees associated with borrowing.

District 23 has been efficient in spending and has the lowest instructional dollars spent per pupil and a low operating expense per pupil when compared to surrounding districts. The operating tax rate is also very low. •

## How Does the Quality of Education in District 23 Compare to Area Districts?

*(As published in the Daily Herald 10/30/09).*

8TH GRADE READING	% MEETS/EXCEEDS
Arlington Heights D25	.97.2
<b>Prospect Heights D23</b>	<b>.96.6</b>
Barrington D220	.93.1
Lake Zurich D95	.92.7
Mount Prospect D57	.92.2

3RD GRADE MATH	% MEETS/EXCEEDS
Arlington Heights D25	.96.6
Lake Zurich D95	.96.1
Mount Prospect D57	.94.9
Barrington 220	.94.8
<b>Prospect Heights D23</b>	<b>.93.7</b>

8TH GRADE MATH	% MEETS/EXCEEDS
<b>Prospect Heights D23</b>	<b>.97.2</b>
Lake Zurich D95	.94.5
Arlington Heights D25	.94.0
Mount Prospect D57	.93.9
Barrington D220	.92.9

## How Does District 23's Cost Per Student Compare to Other Districts in the Area?

*Source: School Report Cards.*

2009 Operating Expenditures/Pupil	
District 26	\$13,974
District 21	\$13,613
<b>District 23</b>	<b>\$12,440</b>
District 25	\$11,647
District 57	\$9,878

2009 Operating Tax Rate	
District 21	2.981
District 26	2.552
District 25	2.264
<b>District 23</b>	<b>2.108</b>
District 57	1.929