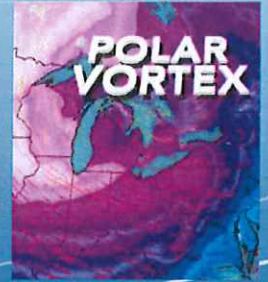


LaGrange Highlands District 106

Superintendent's Newsletter -- Dr. Patricia Viniard

SNOW/COLD DAYS AFFECT HIGHLANDS' CALENDAR!

As you know, school was cancelled on three days this year—November 26 and January 30 and 31—due to significant snow and frigid winter weather. The district is required by State law to make up those lost days of instruction. Therefore, our students' last day of school is currently scheduled for Thursday, June 6. In addition, the date of our eighth graders' graduation has been moved to Tuesday, June 4. Thank you, and here's hoping for no more extreme winter weather!



Highlands Welcomes Dr. Amy Warke!



At its January meeting, the Board of Education approved hiring Dr. Amy Warke to be the next superintendent of La Grange Highlands District 106. Dr. Warke's first day in her new role will be July 8, 2019. Throughout this semester, Dr. Warke is engaging in many activities that will ensure her smooth transition to Highlands, including: having weekly meetings with me/Dr. Viniard; making visits to Highlands to observe activities and begin getting to know staff, students, and parents; attending Board meetings; and reviewing district reports and data.

INVITATION TO PARENTS, STAFF, AND STUDENTS TO MEET DR. WARKE

- The district will hold parent-teacher conferences on Thursday evening, February 14. That evening, Dr. Warke will be in the Administration Center's Conference Room from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

- All stakeholders—including staff members, parents/guardians, and students—are warmly invited to stop by for refreshments and an opportunity to meet Dr. Warke! If you are not available to stop by and chat with Amy on this evening, please know there will be many other opportunities for you to meet her in the coming months.

In addition, Dr. Warke kindly provided responses to some of the questions many of you may have been wondering about:

Q: Why were you interested in coming to Highlands?

Dr. Warke: I had colleagues who attended the Highlands growing up and had heard wonderful things about the district. I grew up in a small town and attended a school that was one building from K-8. I was attracted to the community because of how the district has one building for K-8, and has a small town feel. Additionally, when I read the strategic plan, I noticed the values and beliefs that were on the plan and wanted to be part of a system that had the same values and beliefs that I have.

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February/March "Quick Takes"

February 12

PTC Meeting (7:00 p.m.)

February 14

Valentine's Day

Evening Parent-Teacher Conferences & "Meet and Greet Dr. Amy Warke/Next Superintendent"

February 15

Half-Day Student Attendance/PM Teacher Training

February 19

Board of Education Meeting (7:00 p.m. in LRC)

February 21

First Grade Music Concert (7:00 p.m.)

February 26

Incoming Kindergarten Registration (4-6:00 p.m.)

February 27

"Late Start" Day for Students (9:05 a.m.)

February 28

Gr. 5-8 Winter Band Concert (7:00 p.m.)

March 7

Fourth Grade Music Concert (7:00 p.m.)

March 13

"Late Start" Day for Students (9:05 a.m.)

March 14-15

Middle School Musical

March 15

Third Quarter Ends

March 19

Board of Education Meeting (7:00 p.m.)

March 25-29

Spring Break

Continued from previous page:

Q: What do you hope to accomplish in your first year at Highlands?

Dr. Warke: In my first year at the Highlands, I hope to listen and learn as much as I can by visiting classrooms, observing our students engaged in learning, speaking with staff and meeting families. Based on this, I will have a clearer understanding to lead and direct my team to implement plans that will enable our district to achieve the vision and mission outlined by the Board of Education.

Q: How would you describe your leadership style?

Dr. Warke: I would say that my style is collaborative and hands-on. I love to work with teams and see what is happening in the classrooms. If I have had a day full of meetings, I love nothing more than to walk through the classrooms and to talk to the students and the teachers.

Q: Relative to education, what are some specific areas of strength and interest you have?

Dr. Warke: A relative area of strength related to education is developing systems and structures around school improvement, professional learning, and curriculum, instruction and assessment. An area of interest I would have to say goes back to when I completed my doctoral research in the area of homelessness. If I have free time, I like to volunteer at shelters and help students and families in need.

Q: How would you summarize what a world-class educational system looks like?

Dr. Warke: A world-class educational system is one that has student choice, voice and agency in its design. Our classrooms are preparing students to think critically, creatively solve problems, communicate, collaborate and care for their peers.



New Illinois Student Assessment Coming This Spring: Illinois Assessment of Readiness to Replace PARCC

For the past four years, "PARCC" has been the name of the required state assessment administered to students in grades 3-8 for language arts and math. Although ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) is no longer using the PARCC assessment, we will not see much, if any, difference in this spring's state assessments. The reason this spring's new state assessment, called the *Illinois Assessment of Readiness*, will be very familiar to students is because ISBE has contracted (for one year) with the same company that provided the test content for PARCC. The assessment window, established by ISBE, is March 25 through April 26. If your child is in grades 3-8, Principal Graber and/or Principal Papierski will let you know the specific assessment dates for each respective grade.

The Illinois State Board of Education has only contracted with the Pearson Company, who developed the PARCC assessment content, for this year, 2019. ISBE's future plans include: (a) By 2020, ensure a fully online assessment statewide and return assessment results to classrooms and families more quickly; and (b) By 2021, move to a computer adaptive design, incorporate test questions developed by Illinois educators, and develop a true native language assessment for mathematics. Stay tuned!

WINTER WEATHER AND SCHOOL DECISIONS

During inclement weather or in emergency situations, our priority is the safety and welfare of students and staff. We also recognize that a school closing can be burdensome to families due to childcare and work schedules. At Highlands, a school cancellation is considered to be an exception, and we place a strong emphasis on keeping our schools open. **Some of the key factors considered when making the decision include:** the safety and well-being of students and staff; the severity and/or combination of weather conditions (e.g., extreme cold, excessive snow); the timing of the weather events; the ability for safe vehicle travel; and, the operable condition of our buildings, parking lots, and sidewalks.

When a change to the school schedule is being considered, the superintendents from the six feeder elementary districts and LTHS work together with the goal of making a unified decision that is in the best interest of students, families, and staff members. Depending upon circumstances, we also consult the Illinois Department of Transportation, local village departments, and busing providers (if/when applicable). The decision will be made as early as feasible—the evening before, if possible, or early in the morning—and you will be notified via the district's Emergency Notification System. In addition, we provide the cancellation information to the Chicago area's Emergency Closing Center website.

In my six years at Highlands, I can count on one hand the number of times a parent has been critical or angry regarding the decision made. **Your support, parents, is tremendously appreciated!**

