



# **Superintendent's Comments – August 10, 2015, Board of Education Meeting**

August 11 2015 11:20 AM

## **Calendar**

While school starts for students on August 17, there are many activities going on behind the scenes to make sure staff and buildings are ready to welcome students on their first day back. Activities that will take place this week include:

August 11 Kindergarten Orientation

August 13 New Teacher Orientation

August 13 Building Walk-Throughs from 3:00-8:00 p.m.

August 14 Teacher Institute

August 17 First Day of Student Attendance (full day)



## **Safety and Security Meetings**

Last week, the central office administration, middle and high school principals, and I met with Chief Jay Keeven, Lt. Charlie Kohlberg and Sgt. Dennis Gunderson of the Edwardsville Police Department; Chief Todd Link of the Glen Carbon Police Department; and Madison County Sheriff John Lakin to review and discuss the partnership among these agencies and District 7. We reviewed school emergency plans and procedures, the SRO program, and ongoing education and drug prevention initiatives that will take place this year.

I also met with SRO Coordinator Dennis Gunderson and all principals to review both lockdown and evacuation procedures in preparation for staff training that will be held on August 14, 2015.

## **Monsanto Fund Grant Award**

On July 31, District 7 was notified that it had been selected to receive a \$10,000 grant for its *Growing Technology for Data Collection* proposal through America's Farmers Grow Rural Education, sponsored by the Monsanto Fund. The Monsanto Fund supports rural education and its role in growing the next generation of farmers. The organization recognizes that schools are an integral part of that process.

A school district must be nominated by area farmers in order to apply for this grant. Farmers in this area nominated District 7 to apply for this grant to show their appreciation for the quality of District 7's agriculture program.

After the District's application was submitted, it was reviewed first by math and science teachers from ineligible school districts, then by the America's Farmers Grow Rural Education Advisory Council, a group of 29 prominent farmers from across the country.

As Superintendent, I am thankful for the support of those who nominated the District to apply for the grant. Our district encompasses 185 square miles, with a large rural area. The support we receive from the rural community is much appreciated. It has given us the opportunity to fill a need for our agriculture program.

This \$10,000 grant will enable the District to add Wi-Fi access in its greenhouse and purchase 10 Microsoft Surface Pro 3 Tablets that will provide students at Edwardsville High School the opportunity to take their science and agricultural experiments to the next level.

The District provides many opportunities for students to participate in science-based courses, including 19 course options in the EHS Science Department and eight in the Ag Department. Course projections for the 2015-16 school year show over 2,200 students enrolled in at least one of these course offerings.

At the greenhouse, the Wi-Fi and tablets will be used to participate in propagation labs, fertilizer trials, pH trials, and understanding of Integrated Pest Management. In the classroom, students will work in groups to solve problems, and analyze data on the web, all while displaying the results live on the classroom interactive white board. Vernier probes will also be attached to the tablets to assist with data collection and manipulation.

Teacher trainings are already taking place with the use of the Microsoft Surface Pro 3 tablets. The District's lead agriculture teacher and science department chair have been training and experimenting on the device over the last year. Additional trainings occurred during the summer. The District's technology department will ensure that the staff has the necessary training needed to fully implement the use of the Wi-Fi and tablets for instruction.

District 7 developed the Agriculture program and the FFA during the 2004-2005 school year. During this time, the District offered one class called Introduction to Agriculture. Since this course was introduced, the District has expanded the program to eight classes at the high school and an exploratory class, Agricultural Science, which is offered to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at both middle school buildings.

John Davin, Edwardsville High School Agricultural teacher, will manage the project. Davin has played a vital role in the growth and success of the agriculture program and continually looks for ways to expand and increase the success of the agricultural science program. He has established himself as a teacher-leader, specifically in the area of agricultural education.

As teachers and students become more familiar with the capabilities of the tablet, the District anticipates further exploration of applications that can be used across agriculture and science courses.

### **Highlights of Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center's Inaugural Season of Operation**

The Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center enjoyed a successful first year by any measure – it provided an onsite swim facility for EHS students, served as a training facility for competitive athletes at all levels, hosted competitive swimming events that served a wide spectrum of swimming abilities, and worked in partnership with various outreach programs by providing a swim facility for their participants.

We couldn't be more pleased with the Aquatic Center's success. We had great expectations for this facility, and it is gratifying to see that it has exceeded them. It's certainly a valuable addition to our school district, providing increased opportunities for our students. And it can't help but be a boost to the local economy, when 500-800 swimmers come to town to compete in weekend swim meet multiple weekends during the year.

In its opening year, the Aquatic Center served approximately 600 Edwardsville High School students who received swimming instruction as part of the freshman physical education curriculum. Each freshman participated in a 3-week swimming unit. In addition, elementary, middle school and high school students enrolled in the Functional Life Skills program also participated in a swimming unit. Fifteen students also received Red Cross Lifeguard Certification in training held after school.

According to Edwardsville High School Principal Dennis Cramsey, the next steps in curriculum development will include the development and implementation of an advanced aquatics course, as well as units in American Red Cross Lifeguard Training and water aerobics to be taken in PE classes during the school day.

Cramsey, PE Department Chair Lori Blade, Associate Principal Joe McNamara, Swim Instructor and Assistant Swim Team Coach Samantha Shaw, and Aquatics Center Director Bob Rettle are meeting to develop courses that will meet the needs of EHS

students and to schedule the courses in a way that maximizes the use of the pool during the school day. New courses/units will be announced in the fall and will be implemented in the second semester.

The Aquatic Center also serves as a training facility for competitive athletes at all levels. The Edwardsville High School Boys and Girls Swim Teams completed successful seasons in their first year of interscholastic competition.

Other District 7 athletic programs have utilized the pool as a training facility, including Special Olympics participants. The EHS Girls Track and Field Team utilized the pool as an alternative training facility, and the EHS 2015 Boys State Champion Track and Field Team utilized the pool as a rehabilitative option for injured athletes.

The Girls Track and Field team used the pool for training and team building activities last year. Besides team-building activities, Coach MiKala Thompkins said the team used the pool for Active Recovery the day after intense workouts on the track. “I don’t think it’s a coincidence that we had the least number of injuries since I became head coach,” Thompkins said.

In addition to the District’s use of the pool, Aquatic Center Director Bob Rettle said the facility also hosted competitive swimming events that served a wide spectrum of swimming abilities, including 15 IHSA events with 50 – 200 athletes, 6 USA Swimming events with 400 – 600 athletes, 1 USA Swimming Multicultural Clinic with 75 athletes, 1 USA Master’s Swimming event with 100 athletes, 1 Special Olympics event with 150 athletes, 4 YMCA events with 300 – 800 athletes.

The District collaborated with USA Swimming to host six local and regional USA swimming-sanctioned events, including the Ozark “A” Championship and the Martin Luther King Celebration Invitational. More than 1500 athletes participated in these events.

The District contracted with the Edwardsville YMCA to provide training time for the YMCA competitive swim team. In addition, the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center has served as the site for four major YMCA swimming competitions. More than 30 YMCAs from throughout the region have participated in these events.

District 7 established partnerships with a variety of local outreach programs. In October 2014, the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center hosted a USA Swimming Multi Cultural Day featuring former national team member, Byron Davis, accompanied by USA Swimming Diversity Specialist, Manny Banks. The Aquatic Center also hosted the Area 12 Special Olympics Swimming Competition on March 16, 2015.

District 7 conducted an Outreach Program to provide otherwise unexposed youth to basic swimming lessons and water safety best practices. In addition, 150 students enrolled in *Summer Zone*, District 7's fee-based summer childcare program, utilized the facility two days per week during the Summer 2015 session. A minimum of five (5) Red Cross-certified lifeguards were on duty at all times during swimming activities.

The program featured:

- Recreational swimming and organized swimming activities with Summer Zone counselors and EHS Swim Team members
- Teaching platforms to reduce the water depth from the 7-foot depth to a 3½-foot depth
- District 7-provided flotation devices, required for all participants, to ensure student safety in and around the water

According to Rettle, this year's calendar is a repeat of last year. In addition, the CFAC will host the 2016 Midwest Regional Coaches Summit, one of four such meetings in the country, bringing 200-300 coaches to the CFAC. The 2016 Boys IHSA Sectional Championships is also scheduled.

Other programs may include USA Swimming Zones Select Camp, USA Swimming Make a Splash program, university conference championships, continued diversity and inclusion projects, additional collegiate training, USA Swimming national level training camps, the 2016 Central Zone Paralympic Championships, and the 2016 Central Zone Diversity Summit.

According to Dave Courtney, Assistant Superintendent for Business, operations of the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center were self-sufficient during the first year of service (2014-2015 school year). "In addition to revenue received, projected first year operating expenditures of the Aquatic Center were lower than budgeted," Courtney said.

Rettle said that the District is applying to host two additional events for Central Zone USA Swimming: a multi-cultural swim meet in 2017 and a Diversity Camp in 2018. Rettle and EHS Head Swim Coach Christian Rhoten will make a formal presentation and bid for these events at the US Aquatics Sports Convention in September.

Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC) representatives will make a site visit to the CFAC on August 11 to determine if it is a suitable site for their Division II conference championships. Area schools in the GLVC include University of Illinois – Springfield, Maryville University, McKendree University, and University of Missouri – St. Louis.