



Four Oswego CUSD 308 schools earn top state honors

Oswego Community Unit School District 308 is proud to announce that four of its schools have earned a place on the 2009 Illinois Honor Roll from the Illinois State Board of Education. Oswego East High School and Homestead, Prairie Point and The Wheatlands Elementary Schools received certificates of commendation from the state superintendent of education.

Oswego East High School (1525 Harvey Road in Oswego) was one of only 147 schools across the state that posted substantial academic gains, earning its students and staff a state Academic Improvement Award. This demonstrates that exemplary progress is possible at every level and can be sustained. Oswego East has shown an upward trend in state math and reading test results through an improvement of at least 7.5 points from 2008 to 2009.

Homestead (2830 Hillsboro Blvd. in Aurora), Prairie Point (3650 Grove Road in Oswego), and The Wheatlands (2290 Barrington Dr. West in Aurora)

Elementary Schools were three of 438 schools across the state to earn the Academic Excellence Award for 2009. This is the second consecutive year The Wheatlands School has received this recognition. Ninety percent of students in each of these schools has met or exceeded math and reading state standards for at least three consecutive years. They have also made Adequate Yearly Progress in 2008 and 2009 by 70 percent of their students meeting and exceeding math and reading standards, along with 95 percent of their students participating in the assessments and at least a 90 percent student attendance rate.



Oswego East Principal Dr. Jeff Craig and Assistant Principals Brent Anderson and Jim Seput, Homestead Principal Patti Decker and Assistant Principal Tara Phillips, Prairie Point Principal Heidi Podjasek and Assistant Principal Kathryn Schafermeyer, and The Wheatlands Principal Janet DeMont and Assistant Principal Barb Garrison will be recognized by the District 308 Board of Education on March 15 for this accomplishment and their leadership.

It is time to talk to the Governor about education funding

Governor Quinn posted his proposed budget online last week and requested letters of response as to how the budget might be adjusted and the fiscal situation in the state addressed.

Governor Quinn's budget contains a 15 percent across-the-board reduction in education funding.

As District 308 superintendent, I constructed the following letter that outlines my thoughts on how to address the budget problem. I believe it contains the seeds to sow a solid financial future for our state and our students. That can't happen without all of us putting something on the table from which

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a solid, sustainable recovery will begin, and which will serve as a solid economic base for us to build on going forward. We all must be willing to contribute to the solution.

Governor Quinn,

I am writing in response to your request for comments on the proposed state budget. I am the Superintendent of the Oswego Community Unit School District 308 serving the Village of Oswego and portions of Montgomery, Aurora, Plainfield, Boulder Hill, Joliet, and Yorkville. We serve 16,200 children in our schools and employ more than 1,600 teachers, administrators and support staff.

You requested input on how to solve the state's fiscal problems. I have three suggestions as to how that might be accomplished. They are:

- Reform the pension system
- Reduce expenditures across the budget by a reasonable amount
- Reform the tax system in a fair and equitable manner

I would encourage you and the legislature to work together in a bipartisan effort to accomplish this task in a fair and balanced way for all citizens of Illinois. I would make the following general suggestions for each of the three areas listed above.

To reform the pension system, first pass legislation that prohibits borrowing from the system by any individual or governmental body. Second, increase

contribution levels gradually over the next few years for both employees and employers. Finally, extend the retirement eligibility as recommended by an independent actuarial study until the system is again stable and self sustaining.

To reduce expenditures, the state should roll back spending by an average of 7.2 percent to 2007 levels as recommended by The Civic Federation of Chicago. I would also recommend that the reduction

for education be no more than 5 percent, rather than the 15 percent you suggested. The 5 percent reduction will be bad enough—limiting education opportunities for children across the

state and putting thousands of teachers, support staff and administrators out of work. The 15 percent you propose would be devastating and have a negative impact on the education of our children for years.

To increase revenue, form a bipartisan task force to address individual, corporate, and sales tax rates to rebuild our tax system into one that is fair and progressive. The system should also limit the impact to businesses, and provide some incentive for business and job creation to increase state revenue.

It is time to put aside partisan politics and political gamesmanship and exhibit the leadership that you and the legislators were elected to provide. The children and citizens of Illinois deserve your best efforts to resolve these fiscal problems, not more of the same tired rhetoric and inaction that led to this unprecedented problem.

Sincerely,
Dr. Dan O'Donnell
Superintendent of Oswego CUSD 308



Phase II budget reductions to be presented to the Board on March 15

It seems that every week that passed in February brought with it millions of dollars in additional cuts to our district's 2010-11 budget revenues.

As the month began, district officials were charged with eliminating \$5.5 million from next year's budget. Even before those reductions were approved by the Board of Education on Feb. 22, some state sources said that state funding to schools may be reduced by 10-percent—approximately \$11 million more in additional cuts. This week the governor posted his budget calling for a 15-percent reduction in education funding. His recommendation will result in a

Interested in preschool for your child? Please take the survey!



District 308 is proud of the success of Brokaw Early Learning Center, a preschool that supports the learning and early intervention of eligible

special education and At-Risk children in the district.

District 308 is strongly considering opening up registration to this educational-based preschool to District 308 students on a tuition basis. The five-day, two-and-a-half hour program would utilize a research-based curriculum taught by certified teachers.

District 308 parents of children ages 2-4 are asked to complete a brief, 5-question survey so the district can develop a program that meets the needs of its community. The survey can be accessed at www.surveymonkey.com/s/Brokaw.

The survey will be available until March 9.

Please note: the ELC is currently funded through state grants as the state realizes the importance of this type of early intervention for struggling students. Allowing other students to participate on a tuition basis would benefit both the community by providing an educational-based preschool program, and the district as an additional revenue source.

staggering \$16+ million more that District 308 may need to gouge out of its 2010-11 budget.

The Board directed administration to formulate a Phase II plan to address this further reduction possibility. **The plan will be presented to the Board at 7 p.m. on March 15 at Oswego East H.S.**

A \$5.5 million reduction resulted in the loss of 80 employee positions. Tripling that number will be devastating for the District 308 community. See the district Web site (www.oswego308.org) for further details.

The Digital Messenger Web page is visited by thousands of



people each month. Click the Digital Messenger button on the district Web site to view this month's not-for-profit fliers:

- America's Soccer Club Programs
- Aurora Public Library: Teen Spring Programs
- Camp Invention Registration
- Galaxy Micro Soccer League
- Girl Scouts: Minds for Design Engineering Series
- Kendall County Forest Preserve: Walk in the Wild Summer Camps
- Kickers Soccer Club Information
- March 6 Teen Summit
- Naperville Youth Football League
- Oswego Chamber of Commerce April 10 Expo
- Oswego Fire Dept. Free Trading Cards
- Oswego YMCA March Programs
- Oswego Youth Tackle Football Registration
- Oswegoland Park District March Programs
- Plank Home and School Plant Sale
- Rush-Copley Healthplex Summer Camp 2010
- Senator Linda Holmes College Scholarships
- STAGE March 16 Summer Programs Fair
- WAA: Spring Baseball, Softball, Soccer
- Warriors Football/Cheerleading Registration

Breakfast program expands throughout District 308 schools

School breakfast has arrived in District 308! For less than \$2, students can start each school day with a nutritious meal. Students already approved for a free or reduced lunch can now enjoy two meals a day under the same discounted price.

Breakfast service began at the high school level with both Oswego and Oswego East High Schools offering the early morning meal to students prior to winter break. In January and February, the district's four junior high schools began participating in the program. Now, breakfast service is expanding into the elementary schools. The first elementary schools to offer the breakfast option will be Homestead, Old Post, Southbury, Hunt Club, Long Beach and Churchill. The district's goal is to have the program offered district-wide for the 2010-11 school year.

Why is breakfast so important? Eating breakfast increases school performance, reduces behavioral problems, improves nutrition, and helps to reduce obesity (*Food Research and Action Center, 2009*).

In 2007, one in six American children lived in a household where food was scarce. For millions more, there are other barriers to not eating breakfast including not having enough time in the morning and not being hungry prior to getting on the school bus. Since Illinois ranks 45th in the number of students that participate in school breakfast compared to those that participate in school lunch, District 308 is offering an important service to its students.

In addition to making good health sense, the breakfast program also makes good business sense. According to Angie Smith, district finance manager, **the reimbursements the district receives from the federal and state government in combination with the breakfast cost, more than pays for the program.** Smith anticipates that once expanded district-wide, the breakfast program could net the district approximately \$100,000 annually. This revenue enabled the district to reduce the amount that it needed to cut from its 2010-11 budget.

During its February meetings, the District 308 Board of Education:

- Reduced \$5.5 million from the 2010-11 budget.
- Abated bond and interest taxes in order to maintain a 5.06 aggregate tax rate.
- Approved the revised 2010-11 school year calendar by adding an additional day.
- Approved three telecommunication service contracts resulting in a more than \$70,000 annual savings.
- Approved bill payments in the amount of \$2,900,900.96.
- Approved the transfer of \$1 million from Working Cash reserves into the Education Fund to cover bill payments until state revenues are received.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

March 15 BOE Curriculum Committee
6:00 p.m. / Oswego East H.S.

Board of Education Meeting
Phase II Reduction Presentation
7:00 p.m. / Oswego East H.S.

March 29 Special Meeting of the BOE
7:00 p.m. / Oswego East H.S.

NOTE:

The March BOE meetings will be held in the Oswego East H.S. Auditorium

Click the BoardDocs link on www.oswego308.org to access additional meeting information.

