

## **Press Clippings 02/22/2019**

**---The Daily Herald---02/22/2019**

### **U-46 school board hopefuls discuss taxes, school funding**

**By: Madhu Krishnamurthy**



- John Devereux



- Daniel Hancock



- Susan Kerr



- Eva Porter



- Tina Rio



- Kate Thommes



- Ina Silva- Sobolewski



- Jeanette Ward

Eight candidates vying for four seats on the Elgin Area School District U-46 school board are divided on whether raising taxes is necessary to maintain programs and provide quality education.

Incumbents Jeanette Ward of West Chicago and Sue Kerr and John Devereux, both of Bartlett, face newcomers Tina Rio of Bartlett, Kathleen Thommes of Elgin, and Eva Porter, Daniel Hancock and Ina Silva-Sobolewski, all of Hanover Park, seeking 4-year terms on April 2.

Ward, Rio, Silva-Sobolewski and Hancock were unequivocal about not raising taxes, while the other four candidates said they would have to weigh that decision based on needs.

U-46 is funded at 55 percent of its adequacy target -- the calculated cost to educate students based on factors outlined in the state's evidence-based school funding law.

This school year, the district budgeted for roughly \$561 million in revenues -- an increase of \$52 million over the previous year -- and \$558 million in expenditures -- a \$40 million increase over the previous year.

To reach adequacy under the evidence-based funding model, the district would have to spend roughly \$800 million to educate its 38,764 students enrolled this year, said Ward, 45, a product manager for an international chemical company completing her first term on the board.

"It's absolutely shocking ... in a bad way," Ward said. "I don't think we need to spend \$800 million. Enrollment has been steadily declining ... and that's projected to continue. It's projected to decrease 13 percent from 2012 to 2022. Meanwhile, spending is projected to increase 36 percent from 2012 to 2022. In 2019, we will receive an additional \$54 million from the state. So what are we going to do when the money from the state dries up?"

Ward said that with the increased state funding in 2019, the school board could have decreased how much the district collects in property taxes. Instead, the district applied for property tax relief from the state, which works like a grant and would have allowed officials to abate tax money. The request was denied.

Kerr, 62, a retired computer programmer/analyst also completing her first term, said evidence-based funding eventually should allow school districts to reduce taxes, as long as the state lives up to its promise of increased education funding.

"This state has been horribly remiss in the last 20 years in funding education," Kerr said. "We had the most inequitably funded education system in the country. I would love to reduce taxes, but at this point, I don't think it would be responsible."

Devereux, 52, an actuary appointed to the board last June, said that as a result of evidence-based funding, U-46 is in a position to "make smart investments."

"I have no interest, nobody does really, in increasing taxes," he said. "If we're smart in terms of our financial stewardship, we're smart in utilizing additional funds that are made available, we can do a lot of great things without adding to the burden of local property tax."

Rio, 52, who works for the airline industry, said she is against any tax increase and district officials need to reevaluate how funds currently are allocated.

"For us, our taxes have about doubled since we moved to Bartlett. ... It's too much," she said. "Of course, you want the best for the kids and you want a good school ... but the truth is, sometimes you just have to say we can't afford it. Something has to be done, some difficult decisions have to be made ... to not increase our taxes anymore because people are even leaving the state."

Silva-Sobolewski, 56, a Portuguese translator/interpreter, said high taxes are the main reason young couples with children aren't buying houses in Hanover Park within U-46's boundaries. According to the [Illinois School Report Card](#), 59 percent of the district's students come from low-income families.

"They are going to be the taxpayers 20 years from now," Silva-Sobolewski said. "What are the chances that they will be able to buy houses, to maintain their houses, and to do the things we do today with the taxes high and the level of education low?"

Students' educational outcomes haven't improved significantly with increased property taxes, said Hancock, 68, a retired electrical engineer.

"I think one of the mistakes that is made all the time is assuming that money solves the issues of education. It doesn't always solve the issues of education," Hancock said.

"People are definitely fleeing the state. Part of it is the poor operation of the state itself because it is definitely not fiscally responsible. And part of it, too, is property taxes."

Porter, 64, a retired teacher, and Thommes, 44, also an educator, agreed the decision of whether to raise taxes can't be made arbitrarily.

"If taxes have to go up, I would hate to see that as well. But I also know that taxes (are) a very important part of school funding," Porter said.

U-46's per-pupil spending of \$11,946 is low compared to the state average of \$13,337, Thommes said.

"I don't think that the answer is looking at all of the taxpayers and saying you will have to pay 3 percent more," Thommes said. "Right now, we're operating on a balanced budget. We've got money in reserves and we're doing pretty good. So there's really not a need to be raising taxes much beyond that consumer price index. But saying I would never raise taxes isn't a fair assessment either because we need to be sure that we are providing quality education to our students."

## **---The Courier-News---02/22/2019**

### **Elgin-area students among National Merit Scholarship finalists**

**By: Rafael Guerrero**

Nine Elgin-area high school students are among 15,000 finalists in the 64th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

The students will compete for 7,500 National Merit Scholarships worth about \$32 million that will be awarded this spring.

Local students include Alexa Mogan, Bartlett High School, School District U46; Rachel Montesano, Bartlett High School, School District U46; Riya Kumar, Elgin High School, School District U46; Thomas Gallagher, St. Edward Central Catholic High School; Adrianna Bugliarello-Wondrich, St. Charles North High School, School District 303; Kaley Fulcher, St. Charles North High School, School District 303; Brigid Millette, St. Charles North High School, School District 303; Neehah Shah, St. Charles East High School, School District 303; and Kayla Villa, St. Charles East High School, School District 303.

The nationwide pool of finalists represents less than 1 percent of U.S. high school seniors, according to the National Merit Scholarship Corp.

In order to be a finalist, the students selected as semifinalists and their high schools needed to submit a scholarship application complete with academic records, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards.

If selected as a National Merit Scholar, the students will receive one of three scholarships from the National Merit Scholarship Corp., a corporate sponsor or higher educational institution sponsor, some of which are worth \$2,500.

## **--District Administration---02/22/2019 Gifted and talented diversification reaches for full potential**

District leaders employ innovative methods to add more students to gifted and talented programs

**By: Deborah Yaffe**



Five years ago, the lack of diversification in the gifted and talented program in Minnesota's Mankato Area Public Schools illustrated a nationwide problem. African-American, Native American, Latino and low-income students remained severely underrepresented relative to their numbers in the district's population.

In response, administrators overhauled the way they identified high-potential learners, drawing on research into the shortcomings of traditional methodologies.

Their efforts have borne fruit: Today, Mankato's gifted and talented enrollment is more than 11 percent black, Latino and Native American, up from less than 3 percent in 2013-14. The proportion of low-income students has risen from 15.2 to 22.5 percent.

“Our system was built to get exactly what we were getting,” says Heather Mueller, director of teaching and learning for the 8,700-student district. “So what we had to do was build the system differently.”

Across the country, school districts increase the diversification of gifted and talented programs by adopting research-based strategies. These include:

- screening all students, not just those recommended by teachers or parents
- choosing tests that don’t favor middle-class English speakers
- relying on local norms, rather than national ones, to determine who qualifies for enhanced services
- widening the circle of adults scouting for student talent

The diversification work reflected moral and a practical imperatives, educators say.

“We can’t afford to overlook talent,” says Del Siegle, a professor of gifted education at the University of Connecticut, where he also directs the National Center for Research on Gifted Education. “The only way our country is going to reach its potential is if all the children have an opportunity to reach theirs.”

### **Smarter screening increases gifted and talented diversification**

The traditional process for identifying gifted and talented students looks the same in many districts. Parents or teachers recommend children for testing, and if they score high enough, they qualify for advanced instruction. But research shows gatekeeper recommendations can limit diversification by enshrining race- and class-based bias.

It’s far more effective to screen every student. “If you were to change nothing about your identification criteria, but you were to put all of your eligible students through it—instead of only those who were nominated—you would have a big effect on underrepresentation,” says Scott J. Peters, associate professor of educational foundations at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Still, even universal screening needs careful calibration, educators say. Timing is crucial. Screening in September can penalize low-income students who are especially susceptible to summer learning loss, says Donna Y. Ford, professor of education and human development at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee.

When Baltimore City Public Schools (79,000 students) screened second-graders, 5.6 percent tested as gifted. When the district screened kindergartners, 10 percent qualified.

“The brain research indicates that [for] kids of poverty, in particular, the longer you wait to identify and provide services, those neural pathways begin to atrophy,” says Dennis D. Jutras, Baltimore’s coordinator of gifted and advanced learning. “What their potential was, is going to be diminished.”

### **‘Brains are malleable’**

Testing instruments must also be chosen carefully. This helps educators detect potential in students who don’t speak English or whose out-of-school learning opportunities have lagged. Experts advocate using multiple measures. The Mankato district, for instance, relies on three years of achievement-test data. It also uses structured teacher observations and a cognitive-abilities test of verbal, quantitative and nonverbal skills.

To help underrepresented students to excel on gifted screeners, some districts prime the pump by offering enriched instruction before the screening. In the Chicago suburb of Elgin, **School District U-46** (39,000 students) offers weekly instruction on thinking skills to second- and third-graders in 22 low-income schools.





Minnesota's Austin Public Schools reaches out to parents and guardians to encourage them to have their children assessed for gifted and talented programs.

The program aims to prepare students for the universal screening for giftedness that takes place in third grade. "Brains are malleable, and students are certainly wired to learn," says April Wells, the district's gifted coordinator. "We just need to get them before they start falling out of those excellence gaps."

Districts committed to diversifying gifted programs can use local—rather than national—norms to determine who needs extra academic challenges.

Districts don't have to offer gifted services only to students who score above some percentile on a nationally normed test. Educators can offer programs to the top-scoring 5 percent of students in each school building, regardless of national ranking.

### **Political headaches?**

Because de facto racial segregation remains widespread, such geographic diversification often results in a far more diversity. If every district in the country relied on local norms, enrollment in gifted reading programs would rise by 238 percent for African-American students and 157 percent for Latinos, says Peters, the Wisconsin professor.

Local norming can create political headaches, however, as parents hear of divergent cutoff scores at low-income and affluent schools. To avoid the problem, administrators can offer gifted programming to any student who meets either a local or a national norm. This guarantees that a larger percentage of students at high-achieving schools will make the cut. Or administrators can remind parents of the socioeconomic inequities that differential cutoff scores aim to address.

In Paradise Valley USD, which enrolls 31,000 students in parts of Phoenix and Scottsdale, Arizona, Dina Brulles, the director of gifted education, has a ready answer for affluent parents who complain that gifted programs at low-income schools are open to students with lower test scores than similar programs at wealthier schools.

She tells them they're free to transfer their children to those low-income schools. "How many parents do you think, take me up on that?" Brulles asks.

### **Everyone scouts gifted and talented**

Diversifying gifted and talented programs also means expanding the number of adults looking out for high-potential learners.

School psychologists, special education teachers, bilingual instructors, band directors—all can become talent scouts. "We just try to take a really broad perspective and make sure that we're reaching everybody in the school community who has interactions with students, so that if somebody sees a strength, we can try to follow that through," Brulles says.



Diversifying gifted and talented programs can increase costs, but not as much as some educators might think, says the director of Baltimore City Public Schools' gifted program.

Minnesota's Austin Public Schools (5,200 students) targets parents and guardians for special outreach. Cultural liaisons in each elementary school urge families to let high-scoring students participate in gifted pullout programs. "It's a lot of face-to-face contact," says John Alberts, executive director of educational services. "A letter home in a backpack isn't necessarily going to do it."

Identifying a diverse group and then providing needed programming can increase testing, staffing and PD costs, educators say. But "it's much less expensive than people think it is," says Jutras, the Baltimore administrator.

### **Human capital**

Required state tests, rather than costly new ones, can double as initial screeners to determine which students need further specialized testing. Federal Title I funds for needy schools can be used to support gifted programming. "It's allocating and reallocating your existing funds to make sure that you are directing them toward the needs of all students, as opposed to leaving one group out," says Brulles, the Arizona administrator.

Whatever the cost, "we balance that against the cost of missing students," says Alberts, of Minnesota's Austin School District. "If we do it in the traditional way, we're not going to have that human capital that we need to succeed as a nation."

## **SPORTS**

**---The Daily Herald---02/22/2019**

### **WW South shuts down Bartlett for sectional crown**

**By: John Lemon**



- The Tigers of Wheaton Warrenville South celebrate a win over Bartlett in girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.





- Bartlett's Shelly Banks and Wheaton Warrenville South's Mackenzie Stebbins leap for a rebound during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Bartlett's Justina Hernandez, back, tussles with Wheaton Warrenville South's Mackenzie Stebbins during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Bartlett's Teagan Noesen, left, pressures Wheaton Warrenville South's Kylie Ruggles during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Bartlett's Shelly Banks, left, is pressured by Wheaton Warrenville South's Kylie Ruggles during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



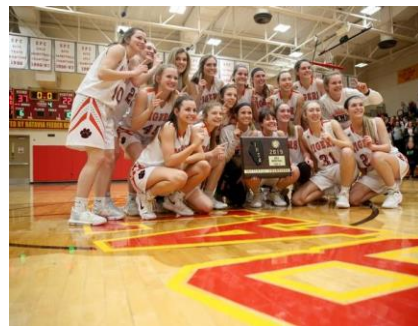
- Bartlett's Alexis Sinclair, left, leads a charge as Wheaton Warrenville South's Paige Miller chases during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Bartlett's Shelly Banks, center, loses a handle on the ball as she is pressured by Wheaton Warrenville South's Kylie Ruggles, right, and others during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- The Tigers of Wheaton Warrenville South celebrate a win over Bartlett in girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- The Tigers of Wheaton Warrenville South celebrate a win over Bartlett in girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Wheaton Warrenville South's Kylie Ruggles soars to the hoop during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Wheaton Warrenville South's Mackenzie Stebbins moves to the hoop during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Wheaton Warrenville South's Abby Struebing goes to the hoop past Bartlett's Justina Hernandez during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Wheaton Warrenville South's players get revved up late in a win over Bartlett during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.



- Wheaton Warrenville South's Kylie Ruggles moves past Bartlett's Savannah Standefer during girls sectional title basketball action at Batavia High School Thursday night.

Bartlett freshman Mackenzie Hare completed a 4-point play with 1:55 left in the first quarter Thursday night in the Class 4A Batavia sectional championship game, cutting Wheaton Warrenville South's lead to 9-7.

As rare as that 4-point play is, it was nowhere near as unique as what was about to follow.

Bartlett didn't score again the rest of the first quarter.

Then Bartlett didn't score in the second quarter.

And, unbelievably, Bartlett also didn't score in the third quarter.

No drive down the lane. Not a free throw. Or a steal and breakaway layup. No 3-pointers from a normally high-powered offense that just scored 60 points on the same court three nights earlier against Geneva. No offensive rebound putbacks off those missed 3s.

Nothing.

Wheaton Warrenville South prides itself on its defense, and it's never been better than Thursday night's 37-22, back-to-back shutout quarters, sectional-clinching victory.

"As you can tell, we're all about defense," Tigers coach Rob Kroehnke said. "I don't have college basketball players that can score. We win with our defense. We stay in games with our defense. The effort these kids put in, I'm so proud of them. I'm so happy they had this opportunity and showed everybody what they can do defensively."

Wheaton Warrenville South (23-8) advances to play Rockton Hononegah at 7 p.m. Monday in the Class 4A Streamwood supersectional.

It's the third sectional title for WW South and first since 2013. The program also won two sectionals as Wheaton Central.

The Tigers, who came from 20 points down to beat Conant in their regional opener, lost to Geneva in last year's sectional championship.

"I'm so excited because I've been in playoffs four years and Geneva ended it two times for us and we just wanted it more than anything," senior Mackenzie Stebbins said.

Stebbins is part of an all-senior starting lineup with Mira Emma, Abby Struebling, Kylie Ruggles and Maria Dohse.

Bartlett (29-5) provided quite a contrast, starting one senior, three sophomores and a freshman.

The Tigers focused on stopping sophomore Lexie Sinclair and Hare, who scored 26 and 15 points, respectively, in the sectional semifinal. Sinclair finished with 7 points and Hare 4 -- on that 4-point play.

"We had to key on certain players and that's what we did," Emma said. "Those two are great players. You stop one of them and it might break down a little. That was our game plan and execute on our end. That's our plan all year."

Emma got the Tigers going early with 8 points in the first quarter including a pair of 3-pointers for a 9-7 lead.

While the Hawks went scoreless in the second quarter the Tigers were barely better, getting a 3-point basket from Ruggles for the only points of the quarter and a 12-7 halftime lead.

WW South's 11 third-quarter points felt like an offensive explosion. It included a short jumper from Struebling, a corner 3 by Emma, a layup by Stebbins and a putback from Ruggles for a 22-7 lead going to the fourth quarter.

Bartlett got plenty of close looks but couldn't get anything to drop, missing all 17 of its shots in the middle two quarters.

"They slow us down and we're a fast-paced team," said Hare, who set the school's single season record for 3-pointers. "It felt like we had a cap on the basket for two quarters. It just wasn't going in. Nothing was falling. We couldn't get the momentum going."

The Hawks' 18-minute drought finally ended when Savannah Standefer drove for a basket 9 seconds into the fourth quarter.

That got Bartlett going. Justina Hernandez followed a 3-pointer, Hare assisted a cutting Sinclair for a basket and Shelly Banks scored on a Hernandez assist for a 9-0 run to pull within 23-16 with six minutes remaining.

But Hernandez fouled out moments later, and despite missing 10 free throws in the fourth quarter the Tigers pulled away.

Emma led WW South in scoring with 16 points. Stebbins added 11 points with 7 rebounds and Ruggles grabbed 10 rebounds to go with her 7 points.

Bartlett, averaging 61.2 points entering the game, shot 19 percent (9 for 47) from the field and attempted just 3 free throws, making one.

"While they are a great defensive team, I felt we missed a lot of really good shots," said Hawks coach Brad Hunt, whose team was trying for its first sectional since the 2012 team finished third in state. "We got the ball in the middle of the zone and attacked the rim and it didn't fall. And then they work 30-45 seconds off offensively and it shortens the game.

"It wasn't our day today. I thought our girls played hard, we just couldn't make a basket. We have a bright future but we still have to go to work and do some things differently."