

State of the District 115

Speaker: Superintendent of Schools, Timothy Shimp

Welcome, and I want to thank all of you for coming out. I know it is a beautiful day, one of the best of this spring, but to give us an hour of your time, we certainly appreciate it. I'm Tim Shimp, Superintendent of Schools. This is my tenth year in the district and fourth year serving in this capacity. Our first annual State of the District is an event, something we've been very excited to plan for, to engage all of you and share the current and the future opportunities that are very exciting for District 115 and to embrace the amazing optimism that ultimately will be reflected over the course of time as we look into the eyes and energy of our growing student population, which will surpass over 6,000 in a district of over 800 employees at the start of each day.

For those of you who may not be aware, we encompass 85 square miles. We service kids from obviously Yorkville, but also Plano, Montgomery, Newark and Oswego. We have 12 separate facilities, including 10 schools and one Administrative Center and one maintenance facility. Before I get going with my presentation, I do want to recognize some of our current and future Board members that are in the audience. First, Dave Dockstader, our Board President. Dave will be leaving us after our April 24th Board meeting, after four terms of 16 years, so certainly we appreciate all the service that Dave has given. Our Vice President, Dr. Lynn Burks. Lynn is in her fourth term serving as a Board member. Dr. Bob Brenart, who was recently re-elected to his fifth term. Mr. Jason Senffner, recently re-elected for his 2nd term. Mr. Tom Kozlowicz, who is in his first term. I'm not sure if Ashley Shields is here, she is in her 2nd term, and Mr. Dean Fisher, who also will be going off after his fourth term as a Board member. So, thanks to all of them.

And I do believe, we do have our two recently elected Board members, Dr. Gary Katula, are you in the audience? Congratulations, Gary. And Dr. Shawn Schumacher. I would also like to recognize our Yorkville Education Association President, Mr. Shawn Collins, who is here. And, if there are any administrators and teachers in audience, please stand. Thank you all for coming.

In respect to our time together, we're not going to engage in an Q and A in this part of the address. You're certainly welcome to ask your questions at the information fair that will immediately follow the presentation. Or, I know there's some question cards that you can fill out and as indicated on the red box, if you check that, one of our team members will get back to you or you can ask your questions after. We have some student helpers that are walking around who will collect those at the auditorium exits at the end of the presentation. And then, we're also going to be sending out a video after the presentation is over, in the coming week, that will address all of the questions and any additional information that you may not have gathered.

Our school-community, is experiencing one of the most exciting times, as the educational opportunities, our changing facilities, our access to technology and student preparation for a world not yet defined, are all at the core of our purpose. As we've moved through three-quarters of the school year, this year has been very special as it has marked the sunrise of our new strategic plan. Our communities' journey together, a path of new beginnings, our shift in mindset and practice and relentless pursue of high levels

of excellence. Through this development of a three-year plan, our school-community and Board of Education has given us direction. A direction that's been shaped by all of you, the stakeholders of the district with the greatest hopes for our District 115 community and with consideration for all the needs of all learners, all staff and our schools for the 21st century.

When you look at our strategic plan, it's embodied with four goal areas.

Student Success – this is at the heart of why we exist and what we stand for. This is the area that's connected to a student's academic preparedness, the development and the growth of the whole child and the essential skills required for post-secondary experience.

Our Community of Learners – this is where we include staff, students and all community members, with an emphasis on personalizing the experiences for kids, for staff and for our community. Focus on professional growth and development and ensure that we give all of you a greater voice and ownership throughout the organization.

Our **partnerships with home and community** is focused on increased communication, the transparency, and greater two-way connections with our supportive school-community, as well as giving you more deliberate, timely and transparent communication regarding the future and current state of our district.

And the last area, **Operational Excellence**, speaks to our service level. How do we support all of our stakeholders through technology and facilities, maintaining fiscal responsibility and bringing greater alignment into our resources and the work that's defined in our Strategic Plan.

You will notice that all of our goals are broadly defined and this really allows flexibility to the work and implementation of detailed action plans to accomplish our goals. A vision is like a dream. It will disappear unless we do something about it. As you're going to hear more from a few of our members, we have created and started the implementation of action plans as we embark on our journey together. We have many changes on the horizon to support the ever changing and globally competitive world to which our children will contribute.

As you'll get to know our Board members, both current and future, I think you'll realize they're very insightful, they're progressive, they're reflective and they take a great deal of care and responsibility to represent our school-community. All, while we face great uncertainty at the State and the Federal level.

The journey we take in District 115 will forever write the chapters of our story and will require us to collectively plan to address the challenges that are both unique to our own local community, as well as shared with districts across the country. The challenges cannot hamper our spirits, nor will they prevent us from maintaining our targeted focus on continued growth, improvement and high levels of excellence. Our challenges will cause us to maintain a high level of reflection and intention that is required to lead our \$70 million-dollar organization.

Education in District 115 must continue to evolve and it must continue to change. We cannot be complacent with the status quo or stop seeking methods to reach the needs of all students, to attract the best and the brightest adults to work with our kids, and to utilize community resources generously offered to our district. Through state-level reform and through our strategic plan directed by our Board, we are creating new approaches, structures and opportunities to support students based upon interest, abilities and current and future aspirations. We are excited about our continued focus on creating

greater flexibility, more choice for student learning and an expansion of programs for all kids. Through the changing development and expansion of programs, new course offerings, increased student access to technology, updated and forward thinking learning environments, and a review of students' schedules, we are aggressively pursuing more avenues to support a personalized approach to educate our students.

Both our district and the State of Illinois believe that we must place greater emphasis on students mastering skills and content, rather than just focusing on a letter grade and completion of assignments. This is considered a competency-based approach to learning, where we focus on meeting students where they are. An approach where we provide students more opportunities and greater flexibility to demonstrate their learning. An approach where students have more autonomy to learn at their own pace, where our school system provides additional experiences for support, enrichment, and to extend student learning beyond the traditional school day. An approach where our amazing teaching staff is encouraged to take risks and allowed for autonomy to ignite the passion in kids. An approach that provides teachers with the most current and researched-based resources to meet the needs of our learners.

Through changing and technology-rich learning environments, through responsible economic planning and influences, college and career and life preparedness and the development of highly qualified professional educators, we are greatly optimistic about what lies ahead for District 115.

Over the remainder of the presentation, you're going to hear members of District 115's administrative team share our current realities and celebrations, as well as a glimpse of the exciting opportunities that lie ahead.

At this time, I will introduce Dr. Dean Romano, the District 115 Chief Operating Officer.

Speaker: Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Dean Romano

Thank you Dr. Shimp. I'm excited to join you all today as I had hoped I can be half as good with my presentation as our students were today. What I'd like to do is get us started. This past year, Kendall County Special Education Coop dissolved. It added over 150 staff members to our school district and we have taken on the programming that was previously provided by the Coop. We believe that this has given us the opportunity to provide a more focused attention to our students with special needs. One of our other celebrations that we wanted to focus on here, is that for many years our district has been able to protect class sizes, even in this financially challenging time. We are a service business, while the majority of our expenses are related to staff. I will touch on this more in a few minutes.

Another one of our celebrations as Dr. Shimp eluded to is the celebration around technology for student use. Our commitment to enhancing student learning and engagement in technology continues to grow. Beginning this coming school year, the district will be rolling out the new one-to-one technology plan for students in the 4th grade and each grade from 7th through 12th grade.

Each of these celebrations is complimented by the Board's commitment to maintain a strong financial position. To assist in that goal, the Board recently updated their policy on maintaining the minimum level of fund balance or reserve dollars of between 25 and 35 percent of annual expenditures. Over

time, or in the past, that had been building up to a point where we were in a very fiscally sound situation. Having a healthy reserve is what provides a district with options. It also limits the need for borrowing and to manage revenue fluctuation, such as the State of Illinois not paying their bills on time.

For example, the State of Illinois currently owes the district in excess of \$2.7 million dollars. Having strong reserve funds, has enabled the district to fully fund the recent high school renovation fund. In addition to providing more classrooms and bringing 21st learning spaces to YHS, without the need to go to referendum. The district was also able to add on more athletics and more common spaces as identified here. These are types of good investments in collaboration spaces that occurred in our elementary schools as well. For the past few years, both Bristol Grade School and Yorkville Grade School have seen each of their libraries completely redesigned. Here at Yorkville Middle School, each of the common areas was transformed into new collaboration spaces with soft seating in a technology friendly design just this past spring break.

Another area that we're very proud of is our debt. Now it may be thought of as odd that we're proud of our debt, but what I'm referring to is what we have done surrounding our debt the past several years. Three years ago, the Board of Education committed to a multi-year plan to both restructure the district's payment schedule and take advantage of historically low interest rates. Now before I go into this a little bit too far in what it looks like, it's important for us to explain how the school debt is different from our home mortgage. On a standard mortgage, we make the same payment each month over and over again, until the life of the loan is paid in full. However, school debt can be structured in such a way that any size debt payment can be made at any point during the term. For example, we can pay half of the debt that is owed over a five-year period, with the remaining being evenly spaced out over the remaining fifteen years. Or, we could space it out in any other configuration. Now there are many reasons why we would do this and I'll explain one of those in just a moment.

Back to the Board's plan for debt. There are three phases to this restructuring which essentially will refinance our debt at the end of each phase. The first two of these phases have already been completed. In doing so, the district has eliminated \$2.8 million dollars in interest. And, with the last refunding, that specific bond actually was reduced in interest payments by 25%. These dollars would have been paid through taxpayer dollars on an individual basis over the life of the loan. But as a result of the fact that we've been able to restructure the debt, those payments will never exist.

The other major benefit of the plan was that our debt will actually level out over time. As I shared earlier, there are many reasons why debt repayment schedules may have not be designed to be flat. Going back in time it was expected that the Yorkville Community would continue to have significant growth as it did during the big housing boom not so long ago. Under that assumption, spreading the debt out to more payments into the future, would mean that the debt would be spread across more property, so that is how our district's debt was designed. But as you can see here, the district had, in 2011, had an approximate \$5 million-dollar debt payment just for that year. And over time, it was planned that those debt payments would reach a total of \$14 million dollars in a single year. Unfortunately, the plan for growth did not actually materialize, and as a result, our property taxes had slowed as far as EAV, EAV is Equalized Assessed Valuation of all the properties in the district. And that's where the Board's plan has stepped in. When the third refinancing is completed this next year, the annual debt payments will flatten out for the remainder of the term of the debt. And as you can see

here, that would reach a point of about \$9 million dollars, instead of growing all the way to that \$14 million dollars.

And now I'd like to share more about the current state of the district and where we are looking at operational services. And it all starts with the students. With over 6000 students, running a school district to meet the needs of all students, takes a team of people to make it happen. Teachers, bus drivers, administrators, custodians, food service staff, instructional assistants, school secretaries and so many more. And then there's all the stuff that's needed to make it all happen. Buildings, buses, curriculum, electricity, technology, paper, lots and lots of paper. So, what I'd like to do here, is talk a little bit about how our actual expenditures are allocated.

As you can see here, we have far the majority of our resources dedicated to staff, and that is in the form of salaries. Now, one of the other things that goes along with that are the benefits associated with that salary. As you can see here, 14% of our budget goes towards benefits. Now the other thing that we have here is as a large component of our budget is our purchase services. Now this is a little misleading as it looks like 16% is spent on stuff, but in the reality of it is that we use our transportation company as well as the food service company to provide for our students. And, what that means is that all of the staff, all of our bus drivers, all of our food service staff actually are being represented within that purchase services area of the budget, in that 16%. So, as you can see, everything else outside of people, really represents a very small amount, at about 13% or so, and so that's something that's important for us to know. We take a look at our revenues and our resources available to actually pay for all the things we just discussed. In this situation, you can see that the majority of our resources come from local property taxes at about 68%. The next largest component is the State Aid, the General State Aid, those are the unrestricted dollars the State of Illinois provides us on an annual basis to operate our schools. The State also provides for reimbursement, a specialized component such as categorical reimbursement, representing another 8%. And then everything else actually comes into play with regards to our revenues, such as fees, support components that are collected as we go.

Now I'd like to turn to our future. I stated earlier that everything starts with students. Here you can see that our projections in student enrollment, shows that we're actually going to continue to grow, and you can see here that we'll have about 275 students more anticipated for the 2019-2020 school year. And what I want to point out here is that's a low estimate, that's if things just continue on the expected pace. This secondary number here identifies the fact that if we have significant growth, for example, of the more than 1000 properties that are fully developed and sitting with roads and utilities all the way up to the lot, and actually becomes developed on a quicker pace, we anticipate that our enrollment here in this school district would increase to nearly 7000 students in the same time period. Now, as you can imagine that would place a large burden on our school district as a whole, and even more so on individual schools where we're seeing that concentrated growth.

To really understand the impact of this growth and the Board's vision of the future, I'd like to show you our bank account. And so, much like our individual bank accounts, depending on the day of the month or the month of the year, it will fluctuate with regards to how much is available. And so, for our school district, it's a little bit more extreme, as we receive the bulk of our money in June and in September, to correspond with the tax receipts here in the county. As you can see here, this high mark, this is the largest amount that we have at any single point in time during the course of the year. And this is actually located here in 2012 and you can see the projected in 2022. As we stand here today, you can

see that we did have some significant dips, and I want to point these out. This decrease in our fund balance of available revenue in the bank, that went down because of the renovations and addition that was made to the high school. So, that it wasn't something that required to be done through a referendum. We actually utilized the dollars that had been increasing in our fund balance to be able to accommodate the needs of kids in a 21st Century learning environment. Now, I want to go back here to this lower mark, this is the amount of money that we have in the bank at the lowest point during the course of the school year. What's important to note is that's typically going to be the month of May, as we receive a large portion of our revenues in June and with regards to the ways we run as a school district, we actually run our fiscal year from July 1st through June 30th. And as we would receive those funds in June, those dollars are actually going to be utilized in the following school year. And as that would actually be case, we would see the largest amount of money available to us in the month of June. Now the important note here on this lower line, is as this line approaches or crosses the zero mark, that's when there's no money in the bank to pay the bills and we would actually have to go out and make a request to borrow money. And if we borrow money, it costs us money. And so, this is something that's important for us to pay attention to on an ongoing basis. So, as you can see, this is what we are projecting, but this projection is just that, it is a projection. It is making the assumption that where we are today is not going to change what we've been doing, and so this is what would happen if we continue the status quo. And the reason that we use this modeling is so that we can project into the future to see what level of adjustments we would need to make on an ongoing basis. So, with that being the case, I'd like to continue to move on just with a few other components.

Now let's take a look at the fact that we have enrollment that has had growth. We have program needs that need to be met. And we've taken a look at what the projections would be financially for the district if we remained at a status quo. We also have a few things that are outside of that discussion that we don't know how to answer. Dr. Shimp alluded to those items earlier. Right now, we receive about \$12 million dollars from the State for that General State Aid which I mentioned earlier, that I presented as 17% of the dollars coming into the district. Right now, there's a discussion at the legislative level that there is going to be some level of change on how the State funds schools. That puts the district at some level of risk for loss of funds. And again, since this represents 17% of our total operating budget, it's a significant concern. One of the other things that's floating around in Springfield has to do with pension costs. And I know it's something that's been in the news quite a bit and so there has been a discussion at the State level for a cost-shift. In other words, currently the State has the burden to pick up a portion of pension costs within the State. In their proposal, that burden would be shifted to the local school districts. And, what's important to note is that if they were to shift just one percent of the costs of pensions specific to our school district, back to the school district, that would be an increased cost to the school district of about \$300,000. Now we don't know if that number is actually going to reach, if it was to be done overtime, but there has been discussions that that might be an increase all the way up to about 8%, with 1% per year added on each year until it reaches that amount. As you can see, that would have another major impact on our availability to fund programming and take away options. And the last item that I wanted to highlight, is there has been a lot of discussion around a tax freeze and what would that mean to our school district. That question has been asked of me on numerous occasions. If we were to have a tax freeze take place right now, that would have an impact on the calendar year 2016 taxes, as well as the calendar year 2017 taxes, the discussion in Springfield most recently, is that it would be a two-year tax freeze. So, when you take a look at combining those two years, the resources that would be brought to the district without the tax freeze would be about \$1.4 million dollars. And as we

take a look at if it was a frozen situation, that \$1.4 million dollars would not appear, would not be available to the school district to actually help during the course of the year. Now, one of the things I also want to highlight with regards to that, is if there was a tax freeze and that does come to fruition, is that that's for the operating side of the budget. As we were talking about the debt, the debt that would have occurred with regard to building schools, that's outside of that, those are dollars that are already committed to our regular payment schedule and those are payments that would still need to be made. So, as we've gone through the process of trying to level out our debt structure and move into a \$9 million-dollar plateau, that would still be something that could be adjusted with regards to an overall tax increase outside of the property tax freeze.

So, what I'd like to do here is to identify the fact that, like myself, I'm sure some of you are concerned about some of the things we've seen. As is true of most things, you're going to be nervous until you know that there's a plan. As we enter into the 2017-18 school year, we do plan to see a deficit budget for the first time in many years. We can consider this due to the fact that we have funds in reserve and that we have funds in excess of the reserves that have been set by the policy that the Board has established most recently. That will allow us over the course of the next school year, be able to dig deep and take a look at how we can do things differently and be more efficient. And during this time, staff will focus on identifying opportunities for reductions. As you can see here, we have a pyramid in regards to operational services, our employees and students. And so over the course of the next school year, we will sit together and identify the different things that we can do to be either more efficient or find savings. That might be going through negotiations with our contractors to identify how we can find ways for them to lower their costs to us. And, we will focus on areas such as transportation, food service, resources, supplies and things like that first, before we start to look at other situations or options that would have a greater impact on either our staff or, lastly our students. So, now sharing that there is a plan, what I'd like to do is hand off our presentation, and it is my privilege to introduce Dr. Baughman, our Chief Academic Officer, to lead you through the next chapter of our program.

Speaker: Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Nick Baughman

Thank you, Dr. Romano. That plan that Dr. Romano describes gives us an opportunity to think about where we want to be as an organization. And, where we want to be, is an organization that creates an environment that fosters success for students. So, the goal of student success for us, is about creating opportunities for kids. Opportunities for kids that open up doors, doors to career readiness, life readiness, and to college readiness. So, here's what we know.

In 2016, the World Economic Forum posted a study that identified that there's a gap between the skills that students learn in school and the skills that they need to be successful in a future work place. So, traditional teaching and learning is not closing the gap in the ways that we want it to. So, let's take a look. They've also identified ten skills that our kids need in the year 2020 to successfully enter the workforce and be productive.

(A video ran regarding the 10 skills.)

So this study was also conducted around 2010 and 2011, when they were making up the prediction of what students could possibly need in 2015. And, as you can see on the left, we have the skills that they

believe that students would need for future workforce members in order to be successful in the business world. Now, this publication came out again in 2016, and I want to highlight some of the changes that we see. If you'll notice, Complex Problem Solving is still number one. But, Creativity was something that while thought to be needed in 2015, was number 10 on the list. Creativity is now number 3, what they believe our students will need in 2020. Emotional intelligence didn't even make the top 10. So the top three skills that the World Economic Forum was recommending that our students will need is: Complex Problem Solving, Critical Thinking and Creativity. So, this knowledge in itself provides us with an opportunity to think a little bit differently.

In the process of developing our strategic plan, our Board outlined a Portrait of a Learner, which has the skills of being creative, being adaptive, independent, collaborative, analytical, socially and globally responsible. So, let's think about it this way. Let's think about what action steps can we take to ensure that students have those opportunities in order to be successful. Opportunity in itself is not going to be enough on its own. We have to have action. We have to have a plan. So, let's think about it this way. We started with a mindset that a one-size fits all approach, this isn't going to work. So, I'll tell a quick story. I shared this image with my six-year-old, who is a first grader at Circle Center, she looked at it and she said, "Daddy, which one is you?" I didn't have much of a response, and I still don't, so if you have any suggestions, you can help me out with that. But if you think about it from a skill-set, thinking about what our environment looks like differently for students, we could figure that out pretty easily and solve all of the problems, and provide those students with the skills necessary to enter workforce 2020 productively.

So, let me tell you a quick story. This is a student, the student's name is Callie, Callie is in the Project Lead the Way class, a Principles of Engineering Class. And, what she's doing is she's creating with a small group, a materials sorter. So, basically, it's a machine that sorts objects based on their physical attributes. So, it's their size, it's their shapes, it's their colors, and then you're going to use sensors, levers and sonar in order to do that. So, basically, what this group did is they created a plan, they developed a 3-D image using technology, and they constructed a proto-type machine. And, then they took a look at the machine and they analyzed how it could get better and they created a better version of that. So, they improved their project. Callie has graduated from Yorkville High School and is now at Bradley. And her story and her experiences were paved by her opportunities and her experiences, and obviously encouraged by her social members. So, how do we ensure that the next generation of students, who may or may not have the supports that Callie did, or the experiences that she had, how do we ensure that they have the opportunities like this. So, an action step that we are taking is the implementation of a developmental counseling model that identifies possible career opportunities and outlines clear steps for students to explore their interests. And, as you've noticed in that example, this gave Callie and her team an opportunity to apply social and emotional learning skills, to work together, to work with each other.

A 2015 article that was published in Columbia University Press, titled Economic Value of Social-Emotional Learning, included basically this: that if students are taught specific social-emotional learning curriculum, starting from the third grade, their life-time learning potential goes up from the low end, by 4 percent, but on the high end by 15 percent, 4 to 15 percent if we explicitly teach social-emotional learning skills starting at the third grade. Now this is not to say that life-time learning potential is an end game, it's not to say that life-time learning potential is where we want all of our kids to be and how we're going to measure ourselves. But, who can argue the fact that our students, today's students could

potentially benefit from some explicit instructions on how to treat each other and how to deal with their emotions. That is why, as an action step, we've established a committee that is bringing forth a recommendation to incorporate a researched-based learning instrument that starts as early as kindergarten. Additionally, we do recognize that technology plays a role in the lives of our students, regardless of our disposition to it. It's something that you just have to recognize. However, it's my belief and it's our belief that we have the opportunity here to teach our students to be responsible stewards of information. I hear a lot that our kids grow up in a digital era, they don't know what life is like without the Smart phone and I recognize that. That does not mean that they're digitally responsible and it does not mean that they're digitally literate. I will give you this, they are digitally active, that is unfortunate. So, this past year we've launched a one-to-one program which basically put 540 devices in the hands of 7th through 12th grade students that took a blended learning course. And, blended leaning takes many forms and has many different definitions. But the definition that we are currently practicing, is basically that the content and the learning can happen digitally through computers, or in a traditional sense through a teacher and student interaction or student to peer interactions. So, this past year we had five of those blended courses that started at the high school and we're very proud to announce, that we have twelve blended course opportunities next year. We also have, as one of our action steps, a plan to launch 2700 devices next year for all of the students in grades 7th through 12th grade and in 4th grade. So, each of the students in those levels will have a device that is personal. So, providing students with a personal device, we need to recognize that personalized learning is about meeting students where they're at, and it's about providing them with a chance to learn at their own pace. Dr. Shimp alluded earlier today about mastery learning and we recognize that students do learn in different ways. So, our comprehensive learning and grading plan, which is driven by mastery learning provides students an opportunity to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways and also gives them a chance to re-learn as well, and also re-take assessments after they re-learn.

Additionally, our dual language program, that starts in kindergarten, is a success worth mentioning. We have, in there, students who are learning English and Spanish, to be bi-literate starting in third grade, that could potentially lead to a seal of bi-literacy on their diploma. Additionally, our special education program is now integrated, which was mentioned earlier, is now integrated into our current system with the idea that equitable rigor is a right that all students should have access to. Additionally, our field experience program, which is starting in 2017, is allowing our high school students an opportunity to learn from our local businesses during and after the school day. So, these opportunities have also given us a chance to rethink our learning spaces. And so, these are some images at the high school of some of these spaces that basically have the underlying theme that access to information should be happening everywhere.

Academically, this past year, as a big success, our composite ACT score was the highest in history at 20.9, which effectively means that the number of students that are scoring above a 21 on the ACT is increasing. You can see the increase from the 2016 class to the 2017 class. And, the percentage of students scoring above 21 is also increasing. Additionally, in this slide, we have more students that are taking the college board advanced placement test. This past year, we had seven students earn Scholars with Honors, 12 students earning Scholars with Distinction status. So, to put this graph in perspective, we have more students that are taking the exam and more students that are performing better on it. Scoring a 3 or better on a college board ACT exam basically means, in the State of Illinois, that students

have an opportunity to earn advanced placement or earn college credit. Research supports that AP students have a greater likelihood of earning a college degree.

We recognize that our actions that open up doors to opportunities for our students do not happen in isolation. We recognize that our teachers, our para-professionals, our parents, our Board members, secretaries, the building and grounds staff, technological staff, community members, they all play a key role in opening up the doors for college readiness, life readiness and career readiness for our students.

And, at this time, I will turn it over to Dr. Shimp.

Speaker: Superintendent of Schools, Timothy Shimp

Thank you, Nick.

I want to close things up in a few minutes. It is hard to talk about so much going on in a short period of time, but I guess one of my Call to Actions for us as a community is to Embrace our Journey together. We must collectively, that means all of us, choose the most effective path to increase our levels of excellence and success for all members of our community. There's going to be time to stop along the way, much like today, to reflect, celebrate, laugh and share our successes, as well as figure out how do we overcome some of the challenges that we know we're going to face in the years to come. What I do know is we're going to be able to create some long-lasting memories for the kids, the adults that we work with, with our community that has been so amazingly supportive over the years, and who have entrusted us with their greatest prized possessions, our students.

This past year, we've made a concerted effort to provide our internal, as well as our external public with more timely and transparent communication. It is certainly something that the Board has made a great emphasis on through the school year. Through our district and building-level newsletters, through our social media, our updated websites, we've never been as thorough and responsive in our communication efforts. We've been deliberate in highlighting the Board meeting agendas and meetings, both during the meeting as well as with our follow-up correspondence. We're not yet done, nor are we satisfied and we have additional plans for our continued focus in this area.

As an avenue to increased morale and emphasize the value that all of our people bring to the health and the growth of our organization, we are finding new ways to celebrate the accomplishments of our staff, of our students and of our community members. Through monthly recognition at Board meetings, increased visibility in our schools, volunteer recognition and new recognition opportunity that's available on our website, as just a few examples, we continue to acknowledge amazing successes of those who contribute and represent District 115 in such a positive manner.

Lastly, I am very proud of our connections, and our greater connection with our community, as we sought greater ways to bring all generations together and to have greater influence on the results of our efforts. We know that the growth and the development of our birth to four-year-olds is such a significant factor in predicting future educational and life successes, and we've started our Book for Newborns program and one of my major emphasis and goals for the future is to find ways we can support our parent community in preparing our future Foxes long before they enter formalized school. We continue to have groups like CAC, our Citizens Advisory Committee, our PT3, which is made up of all

those interested in special education, our Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee, our educational foundation, all of it bringing new leadership to District 115 in our collaborative efforts.

In looking to the coming year, we're going to reach out and build new rapport with our retirees, our alumni, our local business leaders, and by developing of a new Superintendent's Student Advisory Council across the district.

As the superintendent, I believe in the district, I believe in our community, I believe in the professionals that are both in this room and work for us on a day-to-day basis, and it includes the kids that we serve. I believe wholeheartedly that we are stronger as partners in our pursuit of excellence in District 115. The ability for us to do remarkable things will be the result of how well we aggressively pursue new ways of thinking. We have to think differently. We have to jointly create new opportunities and experiences for all students, and we have to relentlessly advocate for higher levels of excellence in all aspects of what we do.

I can say, unequivocally, the members who represent this organization, that we are tenacious, we are kind, we are caring, we believe in our community and the kids that we serve, we are committed to learning, to growing, to stretching ourselves, stretching our thinking, stretching our practices and never being satisfied with the status quo. The Board of education is never satisfied with the status quo. They are always looking for what is the best next opportunity to serve our students. We need your help. We need to you to be present at the schools, at district events, at community functions. We need you present through the feedback that you give us, through the conversation, through the stakeholder surveys and at engaging opportunities like today. We talked a little bit about "we," the capital W, the capital E, WE are Yorkville and I believe there is no greater place to spend a career, to raise a family, or be part of a community that's so rich in tradition, pride and spirit.

I want to thank you for allowing me to serve as your Superintendent of Schools and for your presence and engagement today.

A few final remarks. We did have a group that was instrumental. You see the names up there of our community members and my assistant, Cathy Anderson, and our Director of Community Engagement, Kristine Liptrot, thanks to all of you. I ask that you complete the exit surveys, if you would, so that as we continue bring us back on an annual basis, we can make it more engaging, we can fill the seats of the auditorium. Please give your question cards to the student helpers at the exits of the auditorium, and there will be a video, so if people did miss it, they can watch it. And at the end of this, please stop by the cafeteria if you want to engage more in conversation, there's some table top discussions going on and then make sure you use your drawing tickets to take a chance on winning a number of different raffles. So, thank you. There's some vouchers that you have in your packet that you can help support our local businesses afterward, if you want to grab some appetizers or dinner. We appreciate their support and all they do for our district on an annual basis and we will be around for further conversation. So, thank you.