



## West teachers hope to gain national certification

**W** Zoe Ljubic  
Editor in Chief

This year, 33 teachers at Niles Township District 219 hope to achieve National Board Certification (NBC). At West, 18 teachers are currently working hard to meet the rigorous NBC standards.

This year's 18 candidates applying for NBC include: applied science and technology teacher Tricia Brown; English teachers Dana DesJardins, Michele Hettinger, Kristen Jackson, David Klingenberg and Judy Yoo; science teachers Jayson Foster, Martha Lietz, Anthony Serafini, Jennifer Sipiera and Howard Swider; special education teachers Lauren Hall, Erick Kaiser and John Rocco; math teachers Andrew Roche and Daniel Rusk; physical education teacher Heidi Splinter and fine arts orchestra director Steven Katz.

According to [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org), teachers who achieve NBC have met precise standards through intensive study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer development levels.

Currently, District 219 recognizes six teachers for their excellence in achieving NBC: science teachers Ruth Gleicher, Michael Heinz, Neil Koreman and Ami LeFevre and math teacher James Krzeminski.

Superintendent Nanciann Gatta expressed

optimism for each teacher's success.

"The Board of Education and I are very excited to support this professional development," Gatta said. "This is about our teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. They are modeling a perfect example to teachers and students, that is it important to be life-long learners."

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) allows teachers to embrace the opportunity to examine their practice against the profession's highest standards, according to NBPTS. The application process consists of a four-entry portfolio in a teacher's specific field of expertise.

The NBC offers candidates 25 certificates that cover a variety of subject areas and student development levels. According to NBPTS, it is important for teachers to choose the subject they teach and age group of their students. This way, teachers are responsible for demonstrating content and academic knowledge across the full age range of the certificate they pursue.

According to NBPTS, the portfolio that is submitted for evaluation consists of four entries: the first entry is a classroom-based entry with accompanying student work; second and third entries require video recordings of interactions between teachers and their students and the fourth entry documents teacher accomplishments outside the classroom and



District 219 National Board certificate holders and applicants gather in the Contest Gym stairwell. Photo courtesy District 219 Community Relations

how that work impacts student learning.

Teachers hope to use the portfolio to reflect upon their own teaching.

"You need to align your four portfolio entries to the National standards, and this is where you truly reflect on your practices. [You can ask yourself], 'did I do the best I could in each area to ensure student learning?'" Brown said. "The portfolio is an overall snapshot of what teachers do every day. I feel like this process will benefit my teaching, because I will be able to analyze, reflect and make changes to my teaching techniques."

Splinter concurred.

"I have heard from friends, and seen myself, how very hard, but rewarding this experience is. Through this process, I have been learning a lot about my teaching," Splinter said. "I have videotaped so much and seen things I am doing in the classroom that I haven't noticed before. The process is very eye opening, and I do feel it will benefit my teaching to students."

NBPTS says that through a teacher's portfolio, the teacher can capture the teaching practice in real-time settings, thus allowing trained assessors in his/her field to examine how s(he) translates knowledge and theory into practice.

Recent certificate-recipient Krzeminski expressed his appreciation of the process.

"The experience has changed much of my teaching. The biggest impact is on how I think about my job," Krzeminski said. "The whole process made me slow down, think more and be more deliberate with my teaching."

According to Lietz, the payment charge for submitting an application costs \$2,565, of which the state pays \$2,000 and teacher pays \$565. After the application is submitted, the district will reimburse each teacher with the balance, whether or not (s)he was accepted.

Lietz said she is not only doing NBC to improve her teaching, but for the future of her career.

"I was considering, maybe to transition to teaching teachers in the future, rather than high school students. [Therefore, NBC] would [have been] valuable to have gone through and prepare for that next step," Lietz said.

According to Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Anne Roloff, current NBC teachers have been helping teachers go through the process during late starts and teacher institute days. Many NBC teachers have offered helpful advice for all NBC candidates.

"Perseverance and planning is the key [of getting through the process]. [While I was working on my portfolio], I wanted to quit the whole time. [Thankfully], I had great support

staff around me to keep me going," Heinz said. "[For those teachers who are currently going through the process], you don't need a piece of paper telling you that you are a great teacher. For me, it is a personal achievement. No teacher is looked down on who has not completed the process; it is just a great way for teachers to enhance their performance in the classroom."

After being certified for less than two months, Krzeminski offered current and/or potential candidates advice.

"First of all, you need to know the standards. The goal in the portfolio entries is to show how you are meeting the standards. A teacher can have a brilliant piece of evidence, but if it cannot be related to the standards, it won't be considered. Second, stay organized. The process becomes cumbersome after a while, because of the many details that you must be concerned about," Krzeminski said. "Last, get support from your colleagues. Your department and current NBC teachers, including myself, are always there to give support or advice."

Gleicher expressed her excitement about other teachers going through the process.

"I really liked the concept of becoming [certified], because now I can help others achieve that goal. I did this because I was looking for a different challenge, and the process was extremely reflective," Gleicher said. "All the teachers [who are going through the process of becoming certified], are good teachers. What they do need to remember is [that] during the process of getting all the paperwork completed, they shouldn't lose sight of the big picture—making their teaching better by assessing and reflecting. [It is a continuous process] of taking what they learn, and learning on how they are going to teach their students."

According to the NBPTS, this highest symbol of professional teaching excellence has five core propositions that form the foundation and frame the amalgam of knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs that characterize NBC teachers. The five core propositions include the following: teachers are committed to students and their learning; teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; teachers think systematically and their practice and learn from experience and teachers are members of learning communities.

The Board of Education held a celebration to honor the current NBC teachers and candidates on Sept. 15.

"This dinner celebration was to recognize

please see NBC, page 4.

## Community mourns death of alumnus

**W** Hillary Lindwall  
News/Wire Editor

Students and faculty members recently mourned the death of Niles West alumnus Benjamin Collen, a sophomore at the Illinois Institute of Technology from Lincolnwood.

Collen was reported missing on Nov. 14 and was found dead in the storage room of his fraternity house eight days later. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Collen "died of asphyxia due to inhalation of carbon dioxide from a canister," and his death was ruled accidental. Police were uncertain as to how long his body had been left unnoticed.

Although campus officials posted signs and sent students e-mails concerning Collen and his parents broadcast pleas to the public to come forward with any information they had, Collen's body went unnoticed for over a week.

"My brother was one of those people that you could learn so much from just because he had

so much knowledge about everything, and I literally mean everything. I always called him the human encyclopedia," his sister, senior Sarah Collen said.

Collen graduated from West in 2007 and was a member of the chess team. He also won many awards in science. In college, Collen was an ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) cadet, a member of the Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity and a biomedical engineering major.

"A lot of people are similar to each other and have similar views on the world, but Ben was so unique and different, he would explain things and view them in a way that no one else could possibly come up with," his sister said.

"Here's a pretty funny example. One day, Ben and I were talking about love and the symbols that are used to show love. He said 'I don't understand why people give each other a rose or flowers to show affection, feelings and love because love is supposed to be eternal and last a long time. A flower is not a good object to

represent that because it dies within a week. I would give someone a potato because they last a lot longer, like love should,'" she added.

Current students remember Collen or knew of him.

"I did not know Ben Collen personally, but I know a girl who is in the same Army ROTC detachment," junior Chrissy Soulakian said. "Their detachment is just like [a] family, and I cannot possibly imagine something like that happening to one of my friends, let alone one that I considered family," Soulakian said.

According to Mitra Kalelkar, the Cook County deputy chief medical examiner, small cans of nitrous oxide from whipped cream containers were found by Collen's body. Members living in the Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity house were moved to alternate housing so that police could investigate the scene.

"My condolences go out to Ben's family, friends and anyone else who was affected by this horrible tragedy," Soulakian said.

Sarah Collen added, "A lot of people thought very highly of [Ben]," Sarah said. "They thought he was a very bright and smart guy."

There are groups dedicated to Collen on Facebook™ including, "Rest in Peace Ben Collen," which has 365 members and "Benjamin Collen is Missing," which has 3,688 members. Many of these members shared their thoughts and memories of Collen.

"My heart goes out to Ben's family and friends. I know this is a difficult time and I wish you all peace and the fond memories that Ben has brought to you while he was a part of your life," family friend Jen Dyak said.

His sister offered a postscript.

"What I'll miss most about [my brother] was his ability to trick people into believing some of the most far-fetched things. One time, he even convinced me that the only location in the world that could pick up the radio station 103.5 other than Chicago was Mumbai, which is a complete lie, but with his ability to twist things he was able to [convince me]," she said.

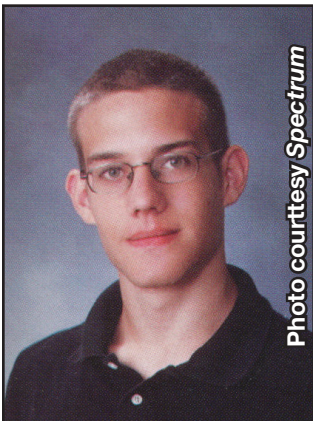


Photo courtesy Spectrum

Collen

# WESTWIRE



## The celebrations and lamentations of winter break

**w Hillary Lindwall**  
News/Wire Editor

As if dealing with regular schoolwork, extracurricular activities and other pressures were not enough stress for students, final exams add a whole new dimension to the student workload. Just the concept of a final exam evokes fear in students: an 80-minute test about *everything* that has been learned so far this year. Having finals right after winter break would seem like the best option because students have a whole two weeks off of school to study, right?

Wrong. Although students intend to study over the break, this time of the year should be fun, not stressful. A break should be just that: a *break*. No school work, no stress—just staying home and celebrating the holidays with family. By having finals right after break, students become even more stressed than before. Pressure and intense stress during what should be the “most wonderful time of the year?” Now that is just wrong.

I am sure that if you ask any student, they would prefer enjoying the holidays in broad daylight rather than being locked in their bedrooms studying for two weeks straight. I don’t see the point in giving students a so-called “break” when its true, unstated purpose is to make students feel as if they have to study for finals during this time.

If final exams were given before winter break instead of after, a great deal of student stress would be alleviated. Students would actually get to enjoy winter break rather than spend it studying for hours on end.

If finals were held before break, skeptics would bring up the point that we would have to start school in the middle of August as opposed to Aug. 26. We will have been on a true break all summer long, so what is one or two fewer weeks? We should utilize winter break and use it to de-stress rather than take an extra-long summer break. Taking an actual, meaningful break in the middle of the school year would be well worth the “sacrifice” of starting school a little earlier.

Additionally, having finals after break makes studying difficult for those students who go on vacations with their families over the break. The last thing on a vacationing student’s mind should be a final exam, but the daunting exam probably ruins the whole trip. For those students who do not go on vacation, many parents enforce strict studying policies and force their children to stay in the house and study, even if this is the last thing they want to do. An evening that could be spent with classmates would actually be spent with a student’s new best friends: heavy, boring textbooks.

The biggest problem I see with having final exams after winter break is the fact that although these two weeks are meant to be a break from everything, final exams create a guilt trip and make students feel like they have to study during this time. The only true break where students are free of any work whatsoever is the day off between semesters. One day off is all we get for all of the work and pressure that we are put under during the nearly 10-month school year? Students should at least get those two weeks off to refresh, relax and rejuvenate.

Having final exams after break would also be beneficial for teachers. Teachers would be able to enjoy break without having to write or revise lengthy final exams or study guides. They would also not have to worry about cramming the material for the remainder of the semester into the penultimate week before winter break when everyone is distracted by thoughts of the holidays and two weeks off from school.

Although a few review sessions with teachers could not possibly be enough study time for students, those who argue that winter break is the perfect time to study are sadly mistaken. If teachers know that finals are before break, they would not continue to pile on loads of homework. They would surely understand that students need time to prepare for finals. Additionally, those who claim that they actually study over break are probably not being entirely truthful, because between holiday parties, celebrations and time with family, there cannot possibly be enough time to do efficient studying. A review or glance would probably best describe the “studying” that happens over break.

By holding final exams before winter break, students would be saved much stress, pressure and heart attacks. Knowing that one should be studying when (s)he is actually celebrating a holiday is not only ridiculous, but it also creates guilt in students. Also, scores might actually be higher if final exams were held before break because students would not forget all of the information that they learned during the first semester over those two weeks, like most do. Finals are stressful as it is, and having to worry about them over break is crazy. Having two stress-free weeks with family should be a time where students are able to prepare for a new semester, not drag out a forgotten semester.

## Niles West cast members recognized

**w Helen Salamanca**  
Staff Writer

**w Hira Malik**  
Staff Writer

The cast of *The Complete History of America: Abridged* has been chosen to reprise the production at the 34th annual Illinois High School Theatre Festival (IHSTF) at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 8-10.

Along with theatre director Andrew Sinclair, 29 actors and crew members will present the play, a comic approach to American politics beginning from the Declaration of Independence to the recent campaign of Senator John McCain and President-elect Barack Obama.

The production, one of 15 chosen from 50 applicants, will be performed at the university’s Krannert Center on Friday evening, Jan. 9.

According to Sinclair, representatives from over 70 universities will be in attendance, offering roles and scholarships to the theatre students.

This production is the first from West to be chosen for IHSTF in four years, and the cast is the first that Sinclair has taken to the festival.

Cast members expressed excitement at the opportunity to perform the play again.

“I am excited because we have not taken a show to [Theatre Festival] which we wanted to do since my freshman year. It is awesome because not all schools can get such a great opportunity like we did,” senior Owais Ahmed said.

Freshman Lauren Langer agreed.

“The play is fantastic and such a great opportunity. I have never been [to Theatre Festival], but I have heard that it is really fun. I am so excited for [Theatre Festival].”

Part of the excitement stems from the play itself, cast members said.

“I think that my favorite scene from *The Complete History of America: Abridged* is when [President George W.] Bush calls up a press conference with the audience,” senior Jason Suran said.

Sinclair echoed Suran’s sentiments.

“I really like the show; it was definitely a solid performance. It makes fun of politics. With everything going on in the world,

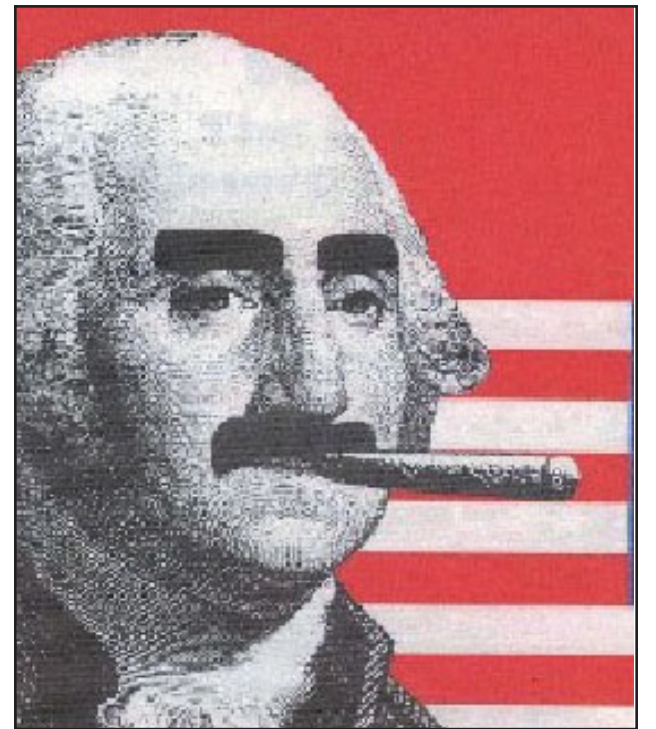
this play was performed at the right place at the right time. With that, we have the right cast and crew. We have the best students to represent our school at the show,” Sinclair said

During their stay, *The Complete History of America: Abridged* cast will have the opportunity to watch other schools’ plays and the annual all-state performance. This year’s all-state play is the John Waters musical *Hairspray*.

Sinclair said that “the students selected for the roles in *Hairspray* were chosen many months ago and are made up of the most talented actors of Illinois.”

Cornalleth, who will be attending the festival for the third time, added, “I absolutely love theatre; it is just so much fun. I am looking forward to the state performance as always.”

The high school casts that will perform with West include:



Glenbrook South, Homewood-Flossmoor, Effingham, McHenry, Unity, Libertyville, St. Charles, Victor J. Andrew, Guilford, Keith Country, Moline, Johnsbury, Lake Zurich, John Hersey, Loyola, Vernon Hills, Genoa-Kingston High School, Morton West, Saint Patrick and Hoffman Estates.

## International Weeks unite West students

**w Hira Malik**  
Staff Writer

The international relations council’s annual International Week, expanded to two weeks this year, will be held Monday-Friday, Feb. 9-20.

“We determined that we have far too many things happening in one week. We thought about expanding [international week] to a month, but we thought that [a long expansion] might water [International Week] down a bit too much. So we expanded it to two weeks. The International Feast is during [the first week], while the International Festival is [the last day of the second week],” student activities director Peter Geddeis said.

International Weeks are put together by the international

Glaubke agreed.

“The [International Weeks] are for every student, faculty member and the community to celebrate diversity. International Weeks are a combination of different activities and events to celebrate the diversity we have here at Niles West,” Glaubke said.

Geddeis sees the rationale for International Weeks in statistics.

“[International Weeks] showcase the diversity we have here at Niles West. Our school seems to get more and more diverse each year with currently 20 cultural clubs with more [additions] every year. It only makes sense for us to set aside some time to celebrate our cultures,” Geddeis said.

Through various resources, International Weeks will be publicized.

“[International Weeks] will be advertised through video announcements, daily bulletins and decorations around the school,” Choi said.

Glaubke hopes to see the various cultural clubs advertise the two weeks themselves as well.

“We are certainly going to advertise plenty with signs. [The] cultural clubs are responsible for doing their own advertisements by posting fliers. We will also decorate the main hall and Oakton lobby to make sure that everyone knows that [International Weeks will take place]. We are also going to put messages up, hopefully for video announcements [as well as] for the bulletin as well,” Glaubke said.

Throughout the two weeks, International Weeks will feature a number of events.

“We have trivia for homerooms about the diversity of our school; we have the traditional feast where cultural clubs will sell food to the entire school to fundraise for their clubs; and we have [a big event] at the end of [International Weeks] called the festival. The festival is where [each club] will [perform the performance that they have put together],” Glaubke said.



relations council which consists of math teachers Jane Choi and Margaret Glaubke. The International leadership council, compiled of the executive members of all the cultural clubs, will assist the international relations council to organize international weeks and make the two weeks successful.

“International Week celebrates diversity at our school. It is so diverse here. Niles West is one of the most diverse schools in Illinois,” Choi said.

# WestWord

## DECA students host charitable hockey event

**w Nikki George**  
Staff Writer

Each year, the Skokie High Flyers (SHF), a Skokie Park District hockey team, hosts a charity event to raise money for the Hornets Sled Team. This year, on Dec. 17 at Weber Place in Skokie, Distributive Educational Clubs of America (DECA) students freshman Ryan

Johanson, junior Matt Moy and senior Kyle O'Connor hosted the event on behalf of the SHF for their community service project.

Applied science and technology teachers and DECA sponsors Eric Lueder, Kay Coughlin and Tricia Brown oversaw the event.

"[At the event], the SHF, a community



hockey team consisting of local hockey stars [played against] the Hornets, a sled hockey team of disabled students," Lueder said. "The teams didn't play real hockey, though; it was sled hockey."

According to O'Connor, admission into the event cost \$5, and all the proceeds from the event went straight to the Hornets fund for new sleds.

"Our goal was to pay for four new sleds,

which is about \$6000," O'Connor said.

Lueder added that raffle tickets were given out during the game, including "gift cards to Maggiano's, Buffalo Wild Wings and Comfort Inn hotel," Lueder said.

KISS-FM and the Chicago Blackhawks mascot provided the entertainment at the event for the evening.

"After we count all the proceeds, we hope to be successful enough to raise enough money to benefit the Hornets," Moy said.

## Summit to be held to encourage respect at West

**w Nikki George**  
Staff Writer

The Niles West Respect Committee will host its annual respect summit Feb. 20, 8:10- 11:30 a.m. throughout the building.

"Students [submitted] a list of workshops they are interested in," student activities director and respect committee member Peter Geddeis said.

According to Geddeis, this school-wide event is open to all students and is designed not only to be enjoyable for them, but to also have students learn about respect.

"The respect committee is trying to encourage respect at West for better school improvement," Geddeis said.

The program will enable students to learn

how to respect one another in various ways.

"The main topics of [discussion] include: respect for self, respect for others, respect for environment, respect for community and respect for the school," executive secretary to the Assistant Principal of Operations and respect committee member Judy Wheatman said.

The program will consist of three sessions that will be run by facilitators from Niles West and from outside the school.

"In [each] session, people in 50-55 different workshops will teach the students about respect," Geddeis said. "About 80 students will be in each workshop at a time."

There are many different workshops students can choose.

According to Wheatman, facilitators include a special Olympics athlete, a Chicago alderman,

a yoga instructor, a representative from Giving Tree Music (an eco-friendly instrument manufacturer), a reptile expert, a student feedback panel (students ask the Principal and Superintendent questions), Muslim comedian Azhma Uzamam and an expert on hybrid cars.

Students will choose two of the three sessions, with the third chosen for them by summit organizers.

"The third session is reserved for the international recital that the students and their clubs have been preparing," Wheatman said.

This year's summit will be the first since the inaugural event held Oct. 15, 2004.



## Orchesis dancers in preparation for annual production

**w Adriana Zalloni**  
Sports Editor

The Orchesis Dance Company will present its annual show Thursday, Feb. 12-Saturday Feb. 14 at 7:30 p.m. in the Robert L. Johnson Auditorium.

According to Orchesis director Mindy Slutsky, this year's company consists of 21 dancers who rehearse for the show every Wednesday and Friday for two hours and on select Saturday afternoons. Slutsky said the dancers have

worked very hard.

"Sometimes, coming out of rehearsals, I am so sore I cannot even move," junior dancer Jayson Biray said. "However, I know it is worth it."

This year's Orchesis officers include seniors Andrea Valle, Morgan Yates, Rebecca Chico, Katie Hayes and Matt Pumanes. According to Slutsky, the officers are responsible for leading rehearsals and making sure the dance pieces are finished.

This year's show consists of a large variety of dance pieces, including an African piece, modern dances, a comedy and extreme hip

hop.

Junior dancer Melanie Demos expressed excitement about the different dance routines.

"It is going to be fun to perform pieces that are a little out of the ordinary," Demos said. "The audience is going to enjoy watching them just as much as we enjoy performing them."

This year's company is considerably smaller than last year's.

"We have nine [fewer] dancers than last year. This group knows what they are doing," Slutsky said.

Valle agreed.

"Even though we are a smaller group this year, we are really working hard to show the school our passion for dance," Valle said.

Other Orchesis members expressed enthusiasm about seeing the reactions of the audience on opening night.

"I cannot wait to see how the crowd reacts to this show," junior Caroline Majerczyk said. "I know they are going to love [the show]."

Slutsky echoed the group's optimism.

"Every year, I think [the show] cannot get better, and then it does," Slutsky said. "The show is going to be amazing this year."



1. In what year did the first man walk on the Moon?
- A. 1969
  - B. 1961
  - C. 1969
  - D. 1969
  - E. 1969

2. What U.S. President gave the White House its current name?
- A. Nixon
  - B. George Washington
  - C. Adams
  - D. Theodore Roosevelt
  - E. Theodore Roosevelt

3. What is the largest country in South America?
- A. Brazil
  - B. Brazil
  - C. Brazil
  - D. Brazil
  - E. Brazil

4. Who shot John Lennon?
- A. I don't know
  - B. Some crazy dude
  - C. I don't know
  - D. I don't know
  - E. Mark David Chapman

5. What soft drink has trademarked the slogan "Obey your thirst"?
- A. Sprite
  - B. Mountain Dew
  - C. Gatorade
  - D. Sprite
  - E. Mountain Dew

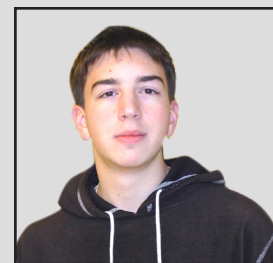
6. Which elected official lives in the Naval Observatory in Washington D.C.?
- A. The Vice President
  - B. I don't know
  - C. Dick Cheney
  - D. The Vice President
  - E. The Congressional dog catcher



A. Freshman - Kelsey Galicia



B. Sophomore- Zane Wagner



C. Junior - Edin Spahic



D. Senior- Alexa Kantzavelos



E. Faculty- Howard Swider

# WESTWIRE

## Short Circuits

### New alumni directory seeks to connect West graduates

**w** Rexly Penafiora II  
Managing Editor

For the first time in Niles West history, an alumni directory will be published in the spring of 2009 for Niles West alumni and the alumni of defunct Niles East.

The directory will be available in hard cover and compact disc versions for \$89 and in soft cover for \$69 according to District 219 Public Relations Director Jim Szczepaniak, who said that the idea of an alumni directory is not a new one.

"There has been a directory for Niles North alumni [for years], but there hasn't been a directory created for Niles West and Niles East alumni," Szczepaniak said.

News of the directory has sparked interest among West alums. West's alumni database on the school website once contained data on only 800 West alumni, but after the district announced the creation of an alumni directory, numbers soared.

"As soon as news surfaced about the directory, the database on the website jumped from 800 names to 16,000," Szczepaniak said.

While there have been many new names in the alumni database, some people have called to be not included in the directory. Harris Connect is the company that contacts alumni about placement in the directory.

"I have been getting many calls from alumni [concerned] about how the company knew where they lived. [However], most calls have been about the directory, so I am very excited about the project," Szczepaniak said.

According to the Niles West alumni page, the cost of the directory is expensive because Harris Connect is not charging the district to produce it. The directory is a first in a series of directories that will be updated every five years.

"We have never had a directory for alumni before and this directory covers all alumni from 1958 to 2007, so I look forward to seeing the final product," Szczepaniak said.

### Superintendent's blog informs community about D219

**w** Zoe Ljubic  
Editor in Chief

Your Superintendent @ Work, the new weblog of first-year District 219 Superintendent Nancinann Gatta, features online text and video content designed to publicize the opportunities Niles West and North offer and to provide the school, community and parents with highlights of important events at each school.

"A lot of public schools are criticized today. This blog is just one example that proves to the nation that public schools do work," Gatta said. "We want to show our community that we are proud of our students."

This easy-to-access web page, that is linked on the district home page, highlights recent events and student accomplishments.

"The community has ownership of the schools, and that is why we want all of the information transparent, so it is not a mystery," Gatta said. "We are determined to make it easier for students, parents, staff and taxpayers to know what the district is doing from the classroom, to the athletic field and beyond."

Just like other web pages and newspaper articles online, Gatta's blog allows viewers to comment on any particular article, post and/or video.

"There are so many cases where communities think that their local schools have lost their way, whether that is because of dropping test scores, violence in schools or other problems," Gatta said. "I hope to get feedback on issues via the interactive blog."

To date, the blog features a few videos highlighting the new artificial turf at West, the culinary arts at North and the theatre program at West. In addition, the blog includes a welcoming speech from Gatta and new Pioneer Press articles. Each of these documents the accomplishments of the students at District 219.

"[With this blog], we are able to highlight the things that our students do to show our community that they are part owners of a working public school," Gatta said.

For more information, visit Your Superintendent @ Work, linked at [www.niles219.org](http://www.niles219.org) or access it directly at <http://sharepoint.niles-hs.k12.il.us/superintendent/default.aspx>.

## A Day in the Life...

### Roloff oversees directors, teachers and students of District 219

**w** Zoe Ljubic  
Editor in Chief

Many people do not realize the importance of the job the person that oversees everything involved with curriculum at Niles Township District 219 holds. The job of running two high schools and overseeing all directors, teachers and students seems like a comprehensive responsibility with a few extra moments for personal interaction. However, for Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Anne Roloff, the people at District 219 come before everything else in her busy schedule. After spending an entire day with Roloff, this reporter understands all the work involved with making sure the teaching and learning that takes place at District 219 runs smoothly, as well as the personality behind the woman in charge.

Roloff arrived to the district office at 7:15 a.m. after a three-mile run and began by checking her schedule, sorting through emails and listening to voicemails. In her office, a desk is neatly organized with folders filled with documents, and a big bookshelf holds large binders of papers and books on anything related to curriculum.

While the management aspect of Roloff's job is crucial, especially the amount of documents she must manage, she says she tries not to let it dominate her schedule. Typically, she says her days alternate between those jammed-packed with meetings and those on which nothing is scheduled. She uses days with nothing scheduled as a day to catch up on paperwork that has not been finished.

Furthermore, Roloff said that spending time with her teenaged daughter is critical. "Whenever my daughter is with me, I make sure to get out of here and work from home," Roloff said. "I manage my schedule depending on when my daughter is with me. I try my best to make as many concerts and swim meets as I can, because it is very important."

Roloff started her career as a French teacher at Rock Island High School with a French degree from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After three years in the teaching position, she moved up to the department chair of foreign language and fine arts for grades 6-12 for six years. Then, Roloff served as a secondary curriculum chair for four years at the district level. Just before coming to District 219, Roloff was Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum at Roselle Elementary District 12 and then at Fenton High School for eight years. Roloff said that working at Fenton allowed her frequent interaction with students and teachers, whereas now such contact is limited. However, she asserted the fact that everything she does now in this position affects each student.

Although she said that she loves her job, as a former teacher she "[misses] teaching, but what I do now is so rewarding to me because everything is affecting so many students and teachers," Roloff said.

Roloff continued her day with a meeting scheduled at 9 a.m.,

with director of applied science and technology Chris Powell and the manager for career exploration Martha Eldridge Heck, regarding the federal and state grants that are used for applied science and technology programs.

After the meeting, Roloff showed this reporter around the district office and Niles Central, greeting employees on her way.

At 10:30 a.m., Roloff met with the director of special education at North for a meeting regarding the course revisions in the student course book.



**Anne Roloff manages District 219's curriculum as Assistant Superintendent.**  
Photo by Zoe Ljubic

Roloff said she understands the things she does truly have a large effect on each student, including working with each department head.

Her next stop was the directors' meeting at 11 a.m., where Roloff gathered with all the directors to discuss the Pinnacle online grading program and to read from *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, a book all the directors are reading with Roloff to help them guide teacher improvement. One of the things Roloff said that she hopes to do in this position is open the conversations up among directors, so that they can become true leaders of their department.

After lunch at 11:45 p.m., for which Roloff provided Jimmy John's sandwiches and chips for all the directors, she concluded the meeting by opening the discussion to directors to share news and information with one another. She expressed hope that they would discuss the things they are doing within their own departments because she said that she wants them to become more comfortable with each other so as to learn from one another.

One of the challenges of the job, Roloff said, is that important meetings are scheduled simultaneously or run long, causing her to either miss a meeting or to arrive late to one. On this day, she had to rush from a private 1 p.m. meeting with Superintendent Nancinann Gatta to a core meeting at North.

After North's core meeting, Roloff returned to her office to check emails and voicemails and then attended a meeting with the director of foreign language Edmund Murphy at 3 p.m., regarding the foreign exchange program.

Finally, after a busy day, Roloff went home to relax, sing and spend time with her daughter.

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all teachers going through the process and show the Board's full support," Gatta said. "These teachers are showing all teachers, and even students, that it is important that more work needs to be done to improve in the classroom."

Roloff expressed excitement on the number of teachers who are willing to go through the process.

"With a process so difficult and demanding, the district is thrilled that teachers are making this commitment. To me, it is not important whether or not they make it, but the process in which they do it through," Roloff said. "These teachers are willing to put each other on the limb and completely pull apart everything they do in the classroom to analyze and critique it, then put it back together and become a better teacher. I really admire everyone who is doing this."

Klingenger believes that NBC standards should be the basics.

"After teaching for close to 20 years, I thought this would allow me to try new things in the classroom. I do not believe the process is difficult; however, it is very time consuming. As for the NBC standards, they should be the basics," Klingenger

said. "When you watch yourself teach, all of a sudden, you realize what you are doing wrong and what you are doing right. This process will definitely help me improve as a teacher and have an impact on my students over time."

In the four years since his certification, Heinz has used his discoveries to improve in the classroom.

"I felt [NBC] was a method of improving myself both personally and professionally. I am now able to reflect back upon the best practice as I plan lessons. I have tried to become more aware of individual students' learning styles and adjust my lessons to fit those individual styles," Heinz said. "The toughest part of teaching is trying to move all students forward. I had to shift to understand the 'science' of teaching as opposed to just the 'art' of teaching."

LeFevre concurred and offered advice to NBC candidates.

"The program allowed me to deeply reflect and analyze each lesson. I would question whether my teaching practices would reach every student effectively," LeFevre said. "[For those teachers currently going through the program], stay motivated and do the best you can. The NBC program is rigorous, but well worth the time to complete. The [process] will confirm your best practices in the classroom and improve how you teach."