

# WESTWIRE



## Codell's salary tops list of shame

w Hillary Lindwall  
News/Wire Editor

On Mon., Feb. 2, the *Chicago Sun Times* ran an article concerning the salary of former District 219 Superintendent, Neil Codell. Last year, Codell made about \$411,500, which, according to the *Sun Times*, was the first time a public administrator's pay reached over \$400,000.

Codell was at the top of the *Chicago Sun Times*' list of public teacher and administrator restitution for the year 2008 although his contract set a base salary of \$182,500 with the option of two 20 percent raises during the time before he retired.

My question is, why was Codell being paid so much? The hundreds of thousands of extra dollars that Codell was paid would be more effectively used if the middleman were cut out and the money went directly to the students' education and well-being.

At the school board meeting that night, School Board President Robert Silverman was ready with a statement supporting Codell's accomplishments during that year.

"Am I happy he came out on top [of the list of the highest paid teachers and administrators]? No. Am I pleased with the benefits he provided our district and taxpayers? Absolutely," Silverman said at the meeting.

The district's statement outlined Codell's accomplishments as Superintendent, stating that they would have rather seen him recognized for the good things he had done throughout the district such as beginning the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) system and increased student attendance.

However, can accomplishments like these outweigh the fact that Codell was one of the highest paid administrators last year?

Morton Grove resident Gil Peters does not think so.

In his statement to the School Board at their meeting Feb. 2, Peters discussed Codell's salary.

"How many taxpayers are forking over all of their high school district tax money for people who never set foot in a classroom, never teach out children anything, but are excellent at pushing papers around and finding creative ways to increase our taxes or to get federal grants, which is also [the taxpayers'] money," Peters said.

Even though the current economy seems to be sliding down a

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slippery slope, the taxpayers are the ones who suffer the most.

"The taxpayer's pocket is not an unshakable object. [The school district is] adding to the stress of a bad economy with precious little to show for it," Peters said.

Although Codell did some good things during his term as Superintendent, his accomplishments do not justify the amount of money that he made. According to the *Chicago Sun Times*, test scores on the ACT and the Prairie State Achievement Exam actually went down after Codell became Superintendent.

According to Peters, who paid \$2552.59 to District 219 in his taxes, at least 161 families paid all of their high school taxes to pay Codell's salary alone. This is a staggering statistic considering the unjustified nature of this fee.

Those who are ultimately hurt in the scheme of things are those who are supposed to benefit from their school districts: the communities whose students attend District 219. Although Codell has made great accomplishments, his outlandish salary at the cost of the taxpayers does not seem like an appropriate reward for his work. The thousands of unnecessary dollars he made could have been used for things that better benefit the facilities and students of District 219.

District officials agree that Codell made a "generous" salary. However, they did not comment on the salary of current Superintendent, Nanciann Gatta, or the questionable justification of the immense amount of money made by Codell. Nonetheless, it is clear that District 219 must shuffle their expenses and reevaluate the way that they spend taxpayers' money.

## Niles Central escapes stereotypical label

w Adriana Zalloni  
Sports Editor

"Niles Central had an image as [the Off Campus Learning Center]. We are working hard to get rid of that image," Principal of Niles Central Jason Ness said. "We changed our school name last year, and with that, we are working to show everyone what Niles Central is actually all about."

Ness' words could not be truer. For years, the Off Campus Learning Center (OCLC) was negatively viewed. However, I spent the day shadowing a student at the recently renamed Niles Central, and it was one of the most positive educational experiences of my life.

Walking into the District 219 central office building at 7700 Gross Point Road, the site of Niles Central, I was greeted by a smiling teacher, Cameron Sweeny. She quickly told me my plan for the day, explaining how the classrooms were set up, which classes I would sit through and whom I would be shadowing. While I waited for my guide to arrive at school, I stood and watched Sweeny interact with each student who entered. She checked the girls with security equipment, and I was surprised when she knew the name of every student. She also asked specific questions pertaining to the individual student.

"Having smaller classes is how Niles Central functions," Ness said. "They allow for individual attention. If a student gets off track, we work to get [him/her] back on track. In large classes, that can't happen. Here at Niles Central, it is likely the student will have the same teacher three times a day. Trust is really built in this school. That is what this school is all about, trust."

My day progressed like any other regular school day. During first period, my shadow had no class, so we toured around the school. I also talked to the school psychologist, John Frampton, who noted that students can drop in to either his office or another classroom, called the Processing Center, whenever they need someone to talk to. If a student seems to be having a bad day, either place will utilize the "Talk Therapy Method" to find the root of the problem.

The first half of the day, I sat through an English class, a

science class and a geometry class. It was during these classes that I learned of the Point System. Each student receives a certain number of points per day. When students start at the school, they begin at the White level. As the student continues to demonstrate good habits in both academic and behavioral areas, (s)he receives points, and eventually progress up the ladder. After five days on White, if no problems emerge, the student advances to Bronze level. After ten days on Bronze, (s)he ascends to the Silver level, and after 15 days, a student with a perfect record achieves Gold. As the student advances through the levels, privileges such as using an iPod™ during class are bestowed

After those three classes, I had homeroom, lunch, VIP work study, health topics and gym. It was exactly like a regular day at West. A guest speaker came for VIP work study. We played UNO in homeroom. The boys played hockey in gym. It was a regular day.

When the

day ended, I got another chance to speak to Ness. He explained that the priority of the school was to reach the students.

"Each student here is different. Each has a different story," Ness said. "It is our job to make [students] as comfortable as they can. Niles Central is all about building that relationship based on trust. We have learned that students respond well to those they trust and respect."

Ness also told me one of the mottos of the school: "thoughts lead to words; words lead to actions; actions become habits; habits make character and character becomes destiny." Ness told me that Niles Central worked hard to make sure the students understand these

precepts. According to the Principal, teens are often our own worst enemy. According to Ness, at Niles Central, staff members work with the students to help them understand that fact, allowing them to know how to deal with their decisions.

Because Niles Central is a school that falls under the category of special education, students' names are confidential, so I cannot relate specific conversations. However, I found that students' interests, like and dislikes about school and life in general were much the same as any student one might meet at West.

After a day at the little school located in the District headquarters, I learned one immutable fact: OCLC is dead. Long live Niles Central. Like its nickname, the Phoenix, Niles Central has risen from the ashes of its previous reputation to evolve into a school based on principles that West would benefit from as well.



## West alumna establishes teaching career at alma mater

w Hira Malik  
Staff Writer

Each year, Niles West welcomes a number of new teachers. For some, the adjustment can be difficult. However, one new teacher who clearly knows her way around the school is West alumna Tayyaba Ahmad, who returned to her alma-mater this year as a math teacher.

Ahmad attended Loyola University, she admits to not being sure about a major, but she was certain about wanting to teach.

"I have been teaching Sunday school since I was in high school. I have teaching experience, but of course it is not exactly like teaching as a regular full time teacher. I knew I would most likely become some kind of teacher," Ahmad said. "Growing up, my favorite subject was history. [My favorite subject] was not math."

Ahmad began her tenure at Loyola as a history major. "I am almost done with my history [courses for a major], but I have not finished because I decided to major in math," Ahmad said.

As a former student, Ahmad credits her teachers at West for the inspiration to become a teacher.

"The background I had from West in English and history was really strong. I had a really positive experience in college because of that. I really thought it was because I was exposed to different styles of work, especially because Niles West is so diverse. You have different opinions, and you are not one-minded. You are

really forced to think outside of the box, which is really helpful," Ahmad said.

When Ahmad was a student, some teachers stood out as her favorites at West.

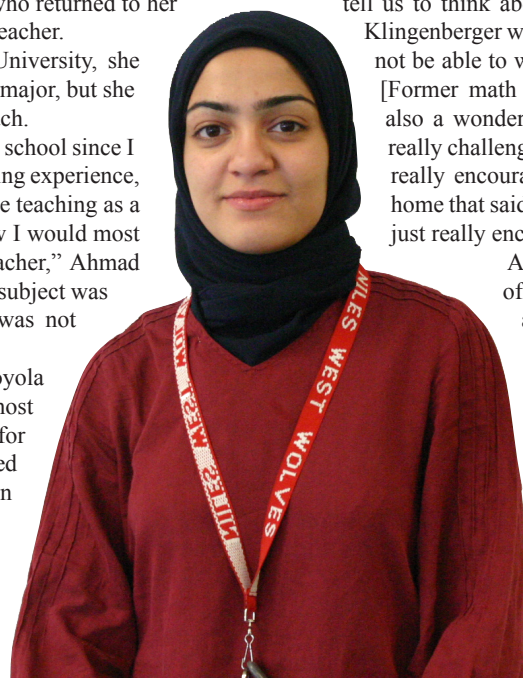
"[Math teacher Ryan] Geu was one of my favorites because every time I got an A on a test, he would give me a lollipop. [Social studies teacher Chris] Schwarz was the best teacher in the world. First of all, he was the best storyteller, which made you remember everything he told [the students.] He would always tell us to think about how we think. [English teacher David] Klingenberg was also amazing. If it was not for him, I would not be able to write. He really taught me how to write well. [Former math teacher and current dean Mark] Rigby was also a wonderful teacher. I loved being in his class. He really challenged me, and if I met those challenges he would really encourage me. I remember receiving post cards at home that said that I did a wonderful job on the test. He was just really encouraging," Ahmad said.

Ahmad took full advantage of all West had to offer, participating in a variety of extracurricular activities, including basketball, soccer, Amnesty International, Quran Study, Seminar for Scholars, Spanish Honor Society, National Honor Society and Indo-Pak Club.

Aside from teaching, Ahmad likes to participate in physical activities such as basketball, volleyball and running. She also likes to relax and spend time with her friends and family.

Ahmad said that she feels proud to have graduated from such a nurturing high school and has come back to pursue her career in teaching.

"[Attending high school at] Niles West was marvelous. I think I would not be half the person I am today if I didn't come [to West]. I was able to have my own identity as a young Muslim-American girl and at the same time be comfortable with [my identity]," Ahmad said.



Ahmad