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## A Special Community

Western Springs has been a special community to hundreds of people throughout the years-not just to residents, but to countless others who have worked within the community. As to those of us who have been connected with the Western Springs' School District for a number of years, we also like to take pride in, and feel an integral part of the growth and development of the community - through its children.

It is difficult to trace the history of the Western Springs' Schools. Records prior to 1894, are simply not available. However, Mr. Maurice P. Clark, Superintendent of Schools from 1957-1974, did examine old records and write a paper entitled "75 Years of Progress in Education." This paper documented much of our history up until 1961. It is from his paper that much of the following information was obtained.

Western Springs' first school was called simply the "schoolhouse" and was located at the present site of the Grand Avenue School. The "schoolhouse" was moved to 4028 Wolf Road, in 1885, when plans were adopted to build a new school building. The original school then became a private residence and has remained as such to the present date. Built shortly after 1885, the new school building was still referred to as the "schoolhouse" until McClure School was built in 1924. At this time the "schoolhouse" became officially Grand Avenue School. In these early days, Grand had a total of three teachers; one of whom also served as principal. These teachers were employed at the rate of \$60 per month with the principal earning \$100 per month and the custodian earning \$36 per month!

The citizens of Western Springs have always strongly supported their schools with passing bond issues and referendums. In fact, it is to their credit that this present day, Western Springs' residents have always said "yes" in the time of the district's financial need. One of the earliest indications of support is recorded in the Board minutes of December 12, 1894. A bond issue to purchase "lot 58 in Block 17" and to issue \$557.83 in bonds to pay for this purchase was passed by a vote of 41 to "not any!"

Our Board of Education 1894, consisted of three members: Mr. L. E. Dana, Mr. E. Philbrick, and Dr. Cattell. It may be of interest to add that the first woman to serve on the Board was Mrs. Collins in 1896! Our Board has always put top priority on adopting and establishing curriculum additions and improvements. A strong emphasis was always placed upon the 3-R's, but as early as 1894, there was an indication that a part-time "drawing" teacher was employed, and in 1899, a music teacher, Mrs. Giddings, we employed to teach a ½ day each week for a salary of \$200 a year. In the Board minutes of August 26, 1895, a motion was made that the "Fries Complet Geogribe" be introduced in the sixth grade. As early as 1896, the citizens of western Springs supported a ten month school year while many Illinois schools were operating on a 6-7 month year. Interest in kindergarten education came early to our district. A petition seeking the establishment of a kindergarten was received by the Board on June 22, 1896, on which there was an affirmative action. However, in 1907, an election was held on the proposal, and it was passed 59 to 16. With the establishment of a kindergarten, the staff of the Western Springs' schools was expanded to five full-time teachers.

The original number given to our district was #9. It is not certain when the number was changed to #101, but it was some time after 1900. The chief administrative officer for the district held the title "principal" up until 1916. At that time the title was changed to superintendent. "Principal" B.F. Clark was our chief administrator in 1896. He was also a teacher himself while supervising the three other teachers. Since that time, our chief administrators have included Mr. John Rowe, Mr. Leonard Wheat, Mr. Theodore Saam, Mr. James Moon, Mr. Maurice P. Clark, and currently, Dr. Donald E. Barnes.

In 1907, the Board voted to "have a course of study submitted by the principal adopted, and to have 500 copies printed." Curriculum studies have always had a major role within our district. Today citizens serve on committees to form "lay advisory" curriculum study groups; a Curriculum and Instruction Council, formed by teachers and

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administrators, reviews and recommends materials for adoption; subject matter department heads report to the Board concerning their programs; Principals and teachers serve as subject matter consultants.

In 1909, the Board of Education adopted its first "Rules and Regulations." This document defined the duties of teachers, principal, secretary, and Board president. It also established the time and place of meetings and provided for the appointment of committees. Today the policy manual, revised and updated in 1973, is a vast volume covering every aspect of education in District 101.

In 1915, a purchase was made from the LaGrande Talking Machine Company. The district was now the proud owner of a victrola! Audio-visual aids have certainly increased in aiding our instruction since that time! Today we have hundreds of pieces of equipment.

In 1915, an addition was made to the Grand Avenue School at a cost of \$4,751. By 1916, instruction in sewing was provided by a first grade teacher and "manual" training teacher was provided. On September 10, 1923, the Board passed a resolution which "authorized private citizens to canvas the community for subscriptions to build an auditorium and gymnasium for the children of the district." This was accomplished with an addition to the McClure School. 1924, a school nurse was employed. The Board also voted to "purchase her a set of scales." In 1929, on the eve of the depression, Franklin Avenue School was built.

During the Depression days, financial problems were naturally the uppermost concerns of the school district. Anticipation and teachers' warrants were issued among countless other papers filed with the state and with Cook County. When taxes were not forthcoming, private citizens made voluntary contributions to help pay the teachers. This action is yet further proof that the people of Western Springs have always strived to give their best support to their schools.

Following the depression, Western Springs faced a period of rapid expansion. The railroad provided easy access to downtown Chicago. With increased population, new schools were needed. John Laidlaw School was built in 1950, followed by Forest Hills and Field Park in 1953. Many additions to all of the schools have been made through the years; the latest being the Field Park second story addition in 1969, and now the complete renovation of the historic "schoolhouse", Grand Avenue School, in 1977.

The district went from a one teacher school in the 1879s to an 87 teacher school district with six buildings in 1977. It is interesting to note that with a history of such rapid growth, a declining enrollment is now the major problem faced by our district today.

Much more could be said about the history of the Western Springs schools. This article is far from telling the complete story. Yet **one factor stands out above all others as this editor was reviewing the district's history. The people and the personalities change, but the deep commitment of the Western Springs' people in supporting their schools and in maintaining a high quality of education has never waived.**