

Mission:

"District 205's school community will create an environment where every student can learn."

We believe:

- The individual has intrinsic value.
- Learning and teaching should be guided by high expectations.
- Learning is a life-long process.
- All students can learn.
- Education is a shared responsibility of the school, student, family and community.
- Students learn best in and have a right to have a safe, positive and supportive environment.
- Diversity enriches the school community.
- Schools foster social responsibility.

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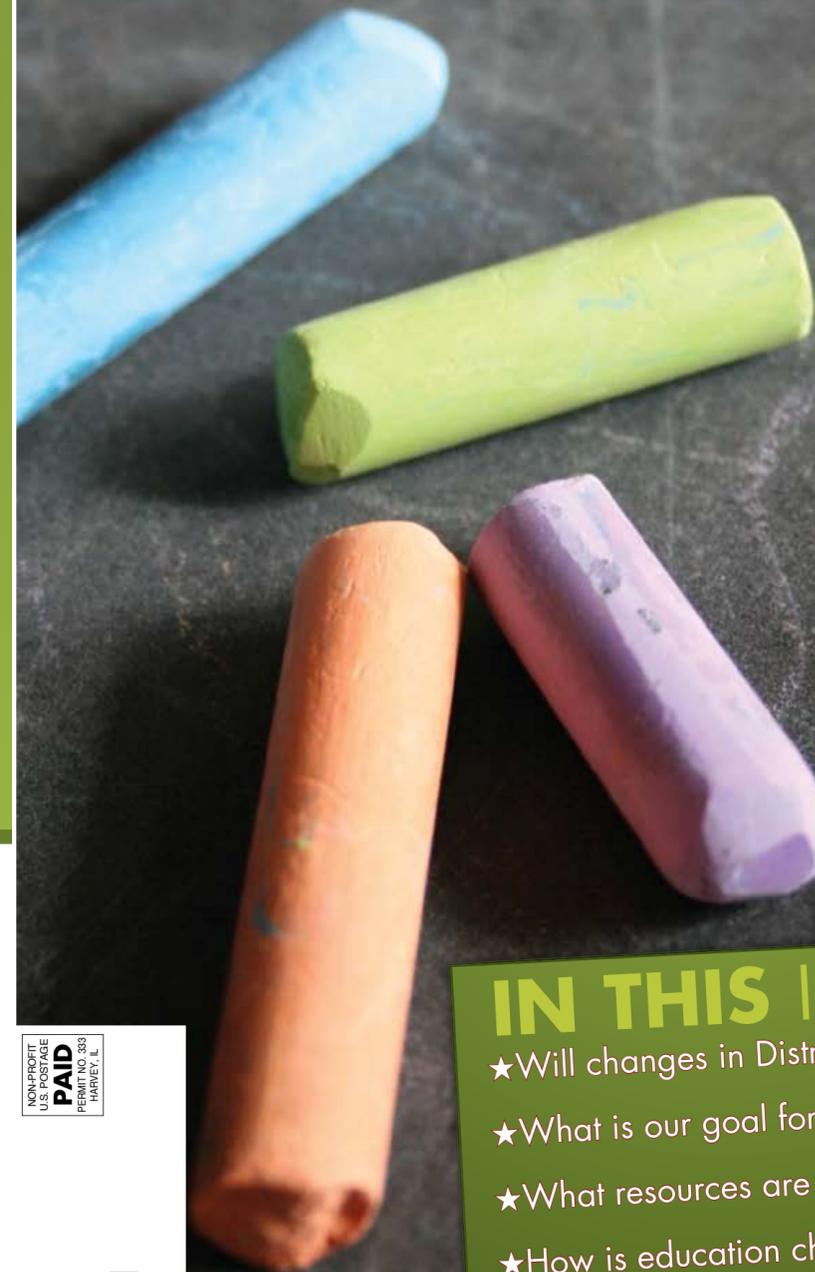
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YOUR SCHOOLS

The Magazine of Thornton Township High Schools District 205

Winter 2011 Vol. 57 Special Edition III

SPECIAL EDITION: What is Our Challenge for the Future?



IN THIS ISSUE

- ★ Will changes in District 205 cause my taxes to increase?
- ★ What is our goal for the future?
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You may view all of the frequently asked questions raised at the community meetings, which were answered in the previous two editions of the Your Schools newsletter by visiting www.District205.net.

Will Changes in District 205 Cause My Taxes to Increase?

If taxes in District 205 communities increase, those increases are **NOT** related to the District 205 transition into a grade level center district or to the School Improvement Grant.

Reasons taxes may increase are:

- The current economic crisis is causing businesses to leave the area, which transfers the burden of lost tax revenue to the remaining businesses and residents.
- Community populations are decreasing, which leads to fewer people living in communities to absorb taxes.
- Tax collections have dropped from 92% to 89% over the past year primarily due to **foreclosures**. Each 1% drop results in a loss of revenues of approximately \$600,000.
- Many economists are projecting that the slow economy will cause **inflation to be near zero**. Since tax caps restrict the growth of real estate taxes to the level of inflation, there may be little natural growth in tax revenues.

Will the Freshman Center and two Upper House Academies create an additional tax burden?

No. The Freshman Center and two Upper House Academies will not create an additional tax burden. The reorganization helps to reduce costs, enrich students' educational experience, improve learning conditions and supports the entire District 205 community, as indicated in the 1983 District 205 Task Force Report.

The Short-Term Benefits

- This Federal Grant will pay for nearly all costs to develop and operate the school improvement plan in years one through three.
- By converting to a grade-center type structure, the Freshman Center will allow the District to make better use of staff through more efficient scheduling to allow for expanded course offerings.
- Estimated Impact (Years One through Three) – **Annual Savings between \$2 million and \$2.4 million.**

Will taxpayers be impacted after the School Improvement Grant ends?

The grant will provide financial support for additional resources for students and staff. By the time the grant ends, most of the upfront costs and related expenses (i.e. professional development/training, starting new courses, establishing the community health center, etc.) will no longer be necessary.

The Long-Term Benefits

- The District estimates that it will maintain 25% of the expenses related to the plan (\$1.5 million) in order to keep successful program areas.
- Since the District will continue to save approximately \$2.4 million annually from the Freshman Academy, these savings will more than cover the costs associated with the continuation of the School Improvement Plan.
- Estimated Impact (Beyond Year Three): – **Annual Savings between \$500,000 - \$900,000.**

Will transportation costs and times increase in District 205?

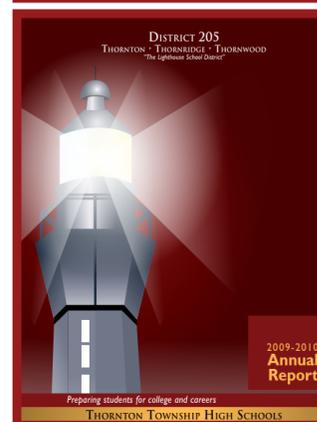
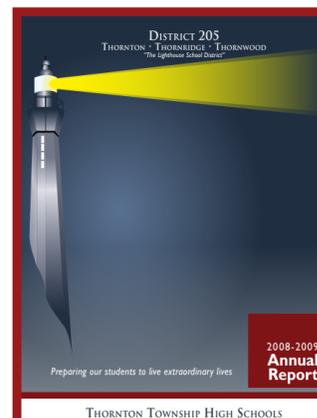
No. District 205 has reviewed the current transportation costs and proposed changes with a transportation consultant. The District expects costs to remain consistent with previous years during the School Improvement Grant transition period. Travel times are expected to remain consistent or even decrease due to more efficient bus scheduling.

Benefits of the School Improvement Grant

- **Creating a community health center;**
- **More opportunities to partner with K-8 Districts;**
- **Increased parent academies/parent resources;**
- **Hiring two additional clinical social workers;**
- **Increased professional development for teachers;**
- **A new staff evaluation system;**
- **Data-driven curriculum and instruction; and**
- **Increased learning time for students and staff.**

Maintaining a Balanced Budget

Since 2005, the District 205 Board of Education and administrative team have balanced the budget. As highlighted in the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 Annual Reports, prior to 2005 the District experienced devastating cuts and reductions of staff, programs and activities. Since that time, the District has drastically reduced its debt, expanded programs, and restored staff, while adding more cutting edge innovations to its curriculum. These accomplishments have earned District 205 top marks on the financial ratings charts (i.e. Standards and Poor's and Moody's Financial Metrics).



STANDARD & POOR'S RATIONALE

The 'AA-' rating assigned to Cook County Township High School District No. 205 (Thornton), Ill.'s general obligation (GO) limited school bonds series 2008 reflects the district's:

- Participation in the deep and diverse Chicago metropolitan area economy;
- Good financial management that overcame a chronic fiscal imbalance and restored positive financial operations following a series of budget adjustments; and
- Strong cash reserves, including working cash.

Adequate but below-average wealth and income levels, and a moderately high debt burden partially offset these factors.

The district's financial management practices are considered "good" under Standard & Poor's Financial Management Assessment (FMA). An FMA of "good" indicates that practices exist in most areas, although not all may be formalized or regularly monitored by governance officials. Management review expenditures on a monthly basis and provides the Board with monthly budget reports. The district budgets with the help of five-year financial projections and multi-year building maintenance schedules.

OUTLOOK

The stable outlook reflects Standard's & Poor's expectation that the district's management will take the steps necessary to maintain at least balanced financial operations and strong cash reserves in spite of the levy cap. The district's participation in the Chicago metropolitan area's diverse economy supports the outlook.

The 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 Annual reports can be viewed at <http://www.district205.net/184110111153416390/site/default.asp>.

District 205's balanced budget continues to receive top financial rankings according to analysts at Moody's and Standards & Poor's based on the District's stable and consistent management.

How do Capital Improvement Bonds differ from Operating Bonds?

When a school district issues bonds they can be issued for capital needs or for operating needs. Bonds issued for capital needs are restricted in their use. They can be used for things such as facility improvements, building upgrades, furniture replacement, etc. as long as the item(s) have been listed under the district's capitalization policy. Bonds issued for operating purposes are used to meet the needs of regular district expenses. This would include things like regular payroll, accounts payable, and required state pension payments.

Before a district completes a bond issue the use of funds must be identified. Generally bonds issued for capital needs are considered **tax exempt** when the bonds are issued and so the issuing district receives a lower interest rate on the repayment schedule. When bonds are issued for operating purposes the bonds are generally considered taxable, which results in the issuing district receiving a higher interest rate and a higher repayment schedule.



"District 205's Balanced budget continues to receive top recognitions"

What is Our Goal for the Future?

District 205 has designed three strong Grade Level Centers--one 9th grade center and two 10th-12th grade centers—to address “The Cost of Doing Nothing” in our current school system. This design will create a system of schools at the high school level to increase student achievement, address declining enrollment, and stabilize the District’s budget.

COST OF DOING NOTHING

- Fewer college scholarship opportunities
- Higher failure rates
- Lack of academic, emotional and social readiness
- Students not at grade level or college level proficient
- Elementary & High Schools create conflicting student expectations

- Increase in number of students taking remedial college classes
- Increase in number of students who do not fulfill graduation requirements
- Increase in number of students needed to take summer school or credit recovery classes
- Academic, emotional and social problems lead to increased disciplinary issues
- Social implications including increased incarceration rates

What is a Grade Level Center?

A Grade Level Center is a school system where students are housed in separate buildings based on grade level (i.e. K-3; 4-5 and 6-8).

Are Grade Level Centers new to the District 205 community?

No. Various grade level center models exist (i.e. K-1, 2-3, 4-5, K-6, 6-8 and 7-8) within the nine elementary school districts that feed into District 205 schools. The most common grade level center model is the junior high layout (i.e. 6-8 or 7-8 grade buildings).

How can Grade Level Centers improve schools and communities?

- Each school more clearly focuses on educational/social needs of children.
- Curriculum/instruction focuses specifically on the grade level/age group.
- Building facility design/usage accommodates a specific age group.
- Curriculum, instruction and programs are more consistent.
- Better support of Special Education/ESL children.
- Schools can use funds and resources more effectively to expand program offerings
- Communication across grade levels and teachers improves.

What Process is Used When Changing Boundary Lines in District 205?

The District 205 Board of Education is reviewing past recommendations regarding changing the District’s boundary lines. The upcoming boundary line revision process will be fair and equitable, and it will involve parental and community input.

Did You Know?

Did you know District 205 was expected to have four schools based on projections from a 1965 District 205 Facility Report that stated each school would house 5,000 students? At the end of the 2009-2010 school year, District 205’s total enrollment was 5,800 students in all three buildings.

Below you will find two charts regarding boundary lines and population trends. The first chart is a timeline highlighting the history of District 205’s boundary line changes, and the second is a chart from the Chicago Sun-Times explaining recent Chicago area population shifts based on 2010 Census information. The second chart is significant because historically population trends (demographics) have been used as a factor in determining boundary lines.

In 1983, the District 205 Facilities Task Force strongly encouraged the Board of Education to adopt the grade level center model. One key finding by the Task Force was that declining student enrollment has caused major imbalances among students and staff. The Task Force recommended grade level centers will have “...the most positive...impact on the district’s educational program and utilization of district resources.” The recommendations were based on the needs to increase course offerings, address declining enrollment, reduce deficit spending, improve diversity, and improve use of the three buildings. These conditions are still true in 2011.

1983 Plan: Freshman Center & Two 10-12 Grade Centers

Reorganizing into a grade level center model would allow District 205 to improve student achievement; increase course offerings; maximize the use of faculty and staff; use District resources more efficiently; and improve communication within and between schools, as well as with parents and the community.

Source: Report of District 205 Facilities Task Force, January 1983, page 27 & 28. The full report can be viewed under “Radical and Bold Changes!” on the District 205 website at www.District205.net.

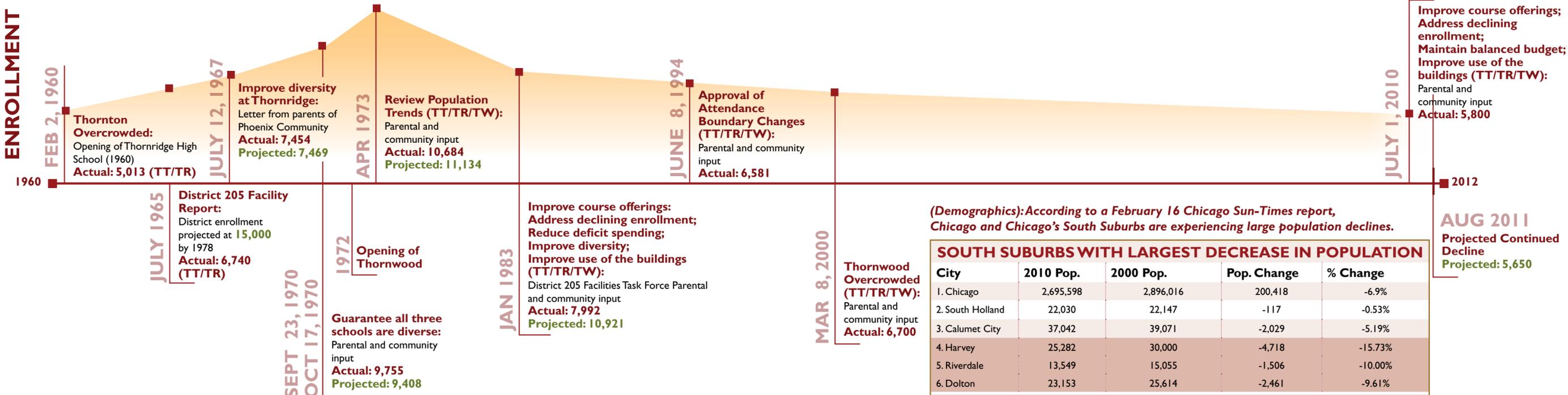
BOUNDARY LINES CHANGES 1960-2012

DECREASING ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

Enrollment in the District is down over 448 students in the past twelve months. This trend is projected to continue.

Since the District loses approximately \$6,000 in State funding for every student lost, State revenues are projected to decrease in excess of \$3 million annually due to enrollment decreases.

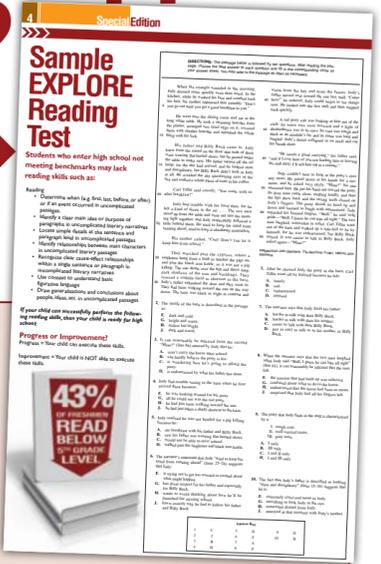
District 205 has NOT met any of the projected enrollment figures stated by researchers.



Parents, How Can You Support Your Child's Education?

PARENTS/GUARDIANS, IN THE LAST EDITION OF YOUR SCHOOLS YOU MAY RECALL TWO SAMPLE EXPLORE TESTS—READING AND MATH.

In this edition you will find reading test preparation skills to assist your child with taking national and state standardized tests. Successful scores on these tests are more than getting a certain number of correct answers, but also about how well your child understands and retains the material.



7 Types of Reading Questions Your Child May Find on the EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT Exams

The EXPLORE exam is the high school readiness test that determines skill level and course placement.

- Main Idea or author's view** questions ask about the purpose or main focus of the passage or paragraph. Main Idea answers are not stated in the passage; the readers must think about all details given and come up with the idea the author wants us to understand.
- Specific Detail** questions ask the reader to find details in the passage or paragraph that usually answer the questions who, what, where, when and why. Usually the question will include where to find the answer. For example, "in lines 24- 32, what problem is Robert facing ..."
- Sequential Relationships** questions ask the readers to put events, conversations, and time frame in the correct order. On tests, Roman Numerals are often used and students are required to use them in re-ordering the items.
- Comparative Relationship** questions ask the readers to find similarities and differences between events, people and ideas.
- Cause and Effect** questions ask the readers to find the reason or reasons why something happened, or a character changes or makes a decision. Very often the word "because" is used.
- Meaning of Words** questions require the reader to unlock the meaning of the word or phrase in 3 ways. 1. Using clues or context to understand. For example: is the word defined in the passage, or is there an opposite word stated to give readers the clue. 2. Structure: what word parts help students understand 3. Figurative language or language that is used in song lyrics or poetry to explain in an indirect manner. For example: "You're my sunshine on a cloudy day."
- Generalization and Conclusion** questions are difficult because the reader will not find the answer stated directly in the passage. They ask the reader to evaluate or analyze the situation, character or events and come up with a judgment or conclusion.

The following are the explanations as to which answer is the correct choice for EXPLORE Reading Passage from the 2nd edition of the Your Schools newsletter:

- C. Conclusion question:** Skill: students need to use what he or she knows about a similar situation in life to reach the conclusion that the boy in the passage was embarrassed.
- J. Detail:** The words that are answers are used in the passage and require close reading.
- B. Generalization/conclusion:** Clue words "It can be reasonably inferred that". Students must understand from real life and from the passage details as they read that the boy's comments show he couldn't believe the pony was his.
- H. Cause/ Effect:** clue word: "because". Close reading is required to follow what came first and what was the result.
- D. Cause/Effect:** clue word: "because". Close reading is required to follow what came first and what was the result.
- F. Generalization/conclusion:** Clue: test tells students what lines to review to get the answer. Students must follow the details and the description of the boy's feelings to reach the conclusion that he was trying not to be worried or excited about what might happen.
- A. Main Idea: clue word:** "the narrator (or author) says". Student must think about what the father in the passage does and put all the details together to understand what the author wants us to know about the father.
- F. Generalization/conclusion:** clue words: "It can be reasonably inferred that...". Students must put together all the details from the paragraph and connect it to what they understand about the humor of the situation and reach a conclusion.
- D. Detail:** The words in the answer choices are used in the passage. The necessary skill is that students understand Roman Numerals to choose the correct words.
- H. Meaning of Words:** Clue: student directed to specific lines that contain the phrase. Students will either need to know the words "stern" and "disciplinary" or unlock the meaning from reading about what the father says and does.

Of all the questions are from the Sample EXPLORE reading passage, there is only one question (#2), which can be found directly in the text. All other questions require higher order thinking.

The above passage can be found under "Radical and Bold Changes!" on the District 205 website at www.District205.net.

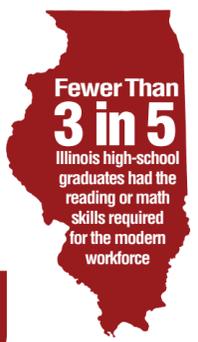
What other parent resources does District 205 provide?

Parent Academies are another avenue for parents and guardians to get involved in a child's education. The District 205 Parent Academy team is committed to providing parents with the cutting edge information they need to support their children in an increasingly competitive global environment. The Parent Academy team offers a compelling series of educational workshops on issues influencing our youth.

- Back to School Night
- PowerSchool Parent Log-In Access – 35, 221 district-wide (Fall 2010)
- Robo Calls
- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Principal's Advisory
- Community Forums
- Strategic Planning Committee
- Safe and Secure Committee
- Awards Night
- District 205 Academic Enrichment Foundation
- Your Schools Magazine

Other parenting resources include:

- District 205 Website
- Superintendent's Community
- District 205 Calendar
- District 205 Parent Academies (www.District205.net)
- National Education Association Parent Resources (www.nea.org)
- Parent Teacher Association (www.pta.org)
- Illinois Education Association (www.ieanea.org)



How is Education Changing Around the World?

As mentioned in the first edition of Your Schools, a disturbing trend is occurring where American students are being left behind in reading, math and science when compared to their peers around the world. The trends show countries like China, Finland, Australia and South Korea are consistently hitting the top of the education charts.

According to President Obama's January 2011 State of the Union speech:

The rules have changed. In a single generation, revolutions in technology have transformed the way we live, work and do business. Steel mills that once needed 1,000 workers can now do the same work with 100. Today, just about any company can set up shop, hire workers, and sell their products wherever there's an Internet connection.

Meanwhile, nations like China and India realized that with some changes of their own, they could compete in this new world. And so they started educating their children earlier and longer, with greater emphasis on math and science. They're investing in research and new technologies...

And now it's our turn. We know what it takes to compete for the jobs and industries of our time. We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world. We have to make America the best place on Earth to do business.

According to the White House, American students rank



among students across the globe.

Whether your child goes on to college after graduation, or decides to go right into the work force to pursue an industrial trade, reading and math abilities are still necessary skills.

Trade	Employment 2008	Projected Employment 2018	Change, 2008-2018	
			Number	%Change
Carpenter	1,284,900 Jobs	1,450,300 Jobs	165,400	13
Diesel Mechanic	263,100 Jobs	278,000 Jobs	14,900	6
Electrician	694,900 Jobs	777,900 Jobs	83,000	12
Plumber	555,900 Jobs	642,100 Jobs	86,300	16
Welder	466,400 Jobs	455,900 Jobs	(-10,500)	(-2)

MATH	Reading	Measurement Skills	High School Classes
All trades require basic math skills (i.e. addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals)	All trades require reading ability	All trades require measurement skills	Algebra I & II
The top 5 trades--carpenters, diesel mechanics, electricians, plumbers and welders--require advanced math such as algebra, geometry, trigonometry and financial algebra.	Reading comprehension for speed and accuracy	Read a ruler in both English and Metric units	Geometry Trigonometry
	Technical reading for charts, graphs, estimates, work orders, purchase orders, blueprints and problem solving.	Convert from fraction measurements to decimal measurements and visa versa	Physics Education and Career Technology Woods Technology Automotive Technology Computer Repair Computer Aided Drafting
		Round off measurements accurately	