



# THE LEARNING CONNECTION

Frankfort School District 157-C

Winter 2019



## A MESSAGE TO DISTRICT FAMILIES FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

I hope you are having a great start of 2019! We certainly are at Frankfort School District 157-C, and I'm proud to share news about the district's fiscal stability, which serves as the backbone for all that we are able to accomplish in the district, in the adjacent article.

Thanks to the stewardship of our staff and School Board members, we are able to enhance programs like our music education offerings, which are highlighted on Page 2. Additionally, thanks to the volunteerism of our parent groups, like the Education Foundation — which is planning its annual Casino Night (See Page 3) — we are able to go above and beyond in supplying classrooms with the newest in technology and educational tools.

On the last page of this newsletter, please review important information about At-Risk Preschool screenings and kindergarten registration. Do not hesitate to contact the District Office at (815) 469-5922 with any questions.

*Dr. Maura J. Zinni*

## DISTRICT MAINTAINS BALANCED BUDGET, BOARD PASSES \$3 MILLION TAX ABATEMENT

At Frankfort School District 157-C, financial stability is a staple of the district's 21st Century Continuous Learning Plan and at the core of the planning that administrations and School Board members put into decisions for the district and its students.

For the eighth consecutive year, the School Board made the decision to abate money to taxpayers. This year's abatement is the largest in recent history, at \$3 million. The Board unanimously voted to approve the abatement from the district's Debt Service Fund at its January meeting.

The district is levying a total of approximately \$29.8 million for operating/capped funds and \$4.2 million for Debt Service funds for 2018 taxes based off of a 3.41 percent increase in equalized assessed valuation and \$13 million in new construction.

Tax rates have remained consistent over the past five years, and in the past two years, rates have decreased due to an increase in property values.

Local sources, including property taxes, remain the district's largest source of revenue (91 percent), particularly following Illinois' passage of its Evidence-Based Funding formula for public schools. The formula divides public schools into four tiers that measure districts' abilities to receive adequate funding from local sources. District 157-C is a Tier 4 school, meaning Illinois has determined the district is able to obtain adequate funding from local sources, and the district, along with other Tier 4 schools, will receive 0.1 percent of any new funding from the state.

School Board members at District 157-C have identified the property tax abatement

as an important part of the levy process each year so that the district is not asking for more money than it needs from local taxpayers.

With this abatement, the district continues to maintain a balanced budget. In the fall, the School Board approved the fiscal year 2019 budget, which projects revenues of roughly \$36.1 million and expenditures of roughly \$36.6 million. The Board has made a conscious effort to not maximize the levy and utilize fund balances to offset this difference.

To maintain a balanced budget and strong financial stewardship of taxpayer resources, the district uses reporting tools to ensure the accuracy and efficiency of its finances, minimizes its tax levy and pursues preventative maintenance.

The district spends about \$6,000 per pupil per year on instruction costs, compared to a state average of \$8,000 per pupil per year. It spends roughly \$10,800 per pupil per year on operational costs, compared to a state average of \$13,300 per pupil per year.

"This shows our ability to be fiscally responsible and maximize results with what we're using," said Kate Ambrosini, Director of Business and Operational Services.

District 157-C is one of two districts in Will County to have a AAA bond rating, and it maintains Recognition Status from the Illinois State Board of Education.

**For more information about district finances, contact Kate Ambrosini at (815) 469-5922 or [kambrosini@fsd157c.org](mailto:kambrosini@fsd157c.org).**

# DISTRICT MUSIC PROGRAMS TEACH STUDENTS VALUE OF PERSEVERANCE, TEAMWORK AND PLAY

The halls and classrooms of Frankfort School District 157-C schools are alive with the sound of music education, with students embracing the joys of learning notes, rhythms, instruments and new skills.

For decades, the district has offered band and chorus to its students, and three years ago, it added an orchestra program. All three of these programs are tailored to students at Chelsea Intermediate School and Hickory Creek Middle School, but the district begins music education at a young age, offering weekly music classes to Grand Prairie Elementary School students and a First Grade Musical. Music teacher Brook Turnbough introduces music to students at the elementary school level.



*Orchestra students practice their instruments before school.*

Once students make the transition to third grade at Chelsea, they have the opportunity to join the Chelsea's Third-Grade Chorus and continue with the school's Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Chorus the following years. These programs are directed by Tracey Lazzo.

Fifth-graders also have the option of joining band or orchestra to try out a new instrument for, sometimes, the first time in their lives.

From fifth- through eighth-grades, student musicians diligently show up before or after school to attend practices.

The Chelsea Band meets three mornings a week, and students attend one weekly sectional class. At Hickory Creek, the Symphonic Band and Concert Band also meet three mornings a week, and students participate in sectional classes, clinics, concerts, parades, contests and more. Jazz Band and Jazz Ensemble at Hickory Creek meet two mornings a

week.

"All these groups meet year round," said Doug Adams, band director at Chelsea and Hickory Creek. "Most HCMS students participate in a summer program that begins a couple of weeks before school starts, and many take private lessons every week. Some even come in during lunchtime to get a little extra practice in with their friends. We pride ourselves on being one of the most active programs in the district."

Orchestra students at Hickory Creek and Chelsea meet Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 7 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., respectively.

Chorus students at Hickory Creek meet after school. Advanced Choir and Varsity Chorus meet weekly and alternate an additional practice every other week, and Show Choir meets twice weekly.

Hundreds of students participate in band, orchestra and chorus, and all have the opportunity to perform before their peers and the public many times throughout the year at concerts, musicals, assemblies and more. Students are also able to compete at music festivals, the Illinois Grade School Music Association's Solo and Ensemble Contest and other competitive events. The district even plans to host this year's IGSMAS Solo and Ensemble Contest Feb. 9 at Hickory Creek.

Music teachers agreed that their favorite part of teaching students at District 157-C is the students' determination to learn and express themselves through music.

Orchestra Director Shannon Shanahan described her students as smart, witty and driven, willing to work on difficult pieces of music until they sound amazing.

Adams said he hopes stu-



*Hickory Creek Middle School students perform in "Fiddler on the Roof," the school's Spring 2018 musical.*

dents learn about the multifaceted meanings music can have for different people through their participation in band.

Shanahan added she hopes students are able to connect with music and feel that it gives them a place to belong during tough times they may face during their adolescence.

"I have seen such true friendships grow between these students over these few years," she said. "Many of these kids are trying to find their place, and being a part of orchestra gives them a safe place."

Concert Band and Jazz Band Director Ben Clark said he hopes students learn communication skills, teamwork and the connection between hard work and achieving goals.

In teaching students jazz, Clark gets to witness them gain the courage to improvise during songs, performing solos in front of their peers and audiences.

"Music is one of the few things in this world where, no matter how many early mornings and late nights we put into it, we still use the verb 'play' to describe what we're doing," Adams said. "We 'play' our instruments, whether we're beginners or professionals. It's great to see kids learn that the harder they work, the more fun they have."



*The Hickory Creek Symphonic Band performs at last year's Veterans Day Concert at the school.*

# EDUCATION FOUNDATION'S 2019 CASINO NIGHT SET FOR MARCH 8

The Frankfort School District 157-C Education Foundation welcomes all to attend its 2019 Casino Night Fundraising Event.

The event, which is the foundation's 24th annual fundraiser, is set for 6:30 p.m.-midnight Friday, March 8, at The Odyssey, 19110 S. Ridgeland Ave. in Tinley Park.

Guests may purchase their tickets online at \$110 per person and \$950 per table of 10. Ticket prices include an open bar and dinner.

Casino Night will feature gaming tables, raffles, live and silent auctions and a DJ. New this year, the foundation will offer travel packages, vacations and experiences for bid during the auctions.

"This is such a fun event, and it's for such a great cause," said Allison Marketti, president of the Education Foundation.

The foundation is seeking additional auction items and corporate sponsorships for this event.

Since the foundation's establishment in 1995, parent volunteers have collaborated to plan hot lunches and one large fund-

raiser each year with the goal of collecting the monetary resources necessary to fulfill teacher-written grants for all three District 157-C schools.

The foundation has granted roughly \$2 million to the schools over the years, helping enrich education for students and enhance teachers' lesson plans through additional resources. Recent grants have helped to modernize learning spaces as well as lessons through the incorporation of the latest technology tools and classroom furniture. The foundation has helped the district succeed in meeting its 21st Century Continuous Learning Plan, creating a collaborative, fun learning environment where students want to participate and grow.

To support

the Education Foundation by attending Casino Night or making a tax-deductible contribution, visit [fsd157c.revtrak.net/Education-Foundation](http://fsd157c.revtrak.net/Education-Foundation).

For more information about Casino Night, to provide an auction item for the event or sponsor it, or to learn about how to get involved with the Education Foundation, contact Allison Marketti at 815-414-1177 or [allisonmarketti@yahoo.com](mailto:allisonmarketti@yahoo.com).



*The Frankfort School District 157-C Education Foundation's Casino Night is a fun event that raises money for teacher-written grants.*

## FROM THE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT

The Frankfort 157-C Education Foundation was formed in 1995 by parent volunteers. Our mission is to enrich the education of our students by providing resources not currently available to our teachers. These resources encompass all areas of learning including art, literacy, technology, math, physical education, science, social studies and character building. With the help of our local community, especially District parents like you, we have been able to make teacher's dreams come true. This last year was no exception!

By purchasing our hot lunches throughout the school year and attending and donating to our Casino Night Fundraising Event, you help our Foundation raise funds each year. Your generosity and support allowed us to recently grant over \$130,000 worth of educational materials back to our three schools. These materials bring innovation and inspiration to our classrooms and libraries. They inspire teachers and allow our students to be engaged in 21st century innovation.

You may have heard your children talk with excitement about these grants. Grand Prairie Elementary school has received a complete reinvention of the school library to allow for collaborative learning, Finch Robots, standing desks, STEM Centers, Illinois Monarch books and hundreds more books for mobile classroom libraries. Chelsea Intermediate School has received STEM furniture and books, a Buddy Bench for recess inclusion, Bluestem books, Tetrax Robots, laptop desks, standing desks, stability balls and flexible seating, and KNEX Simple Machines. Hickory Creek Middle School has received a brand new STEM room, state-of-the-art projector screens to project fitness and various assembly programs, Rebecca Caudill books, a drum set, wireless microphones, and flexible seating for learning. All schools received iPads for therapeutic use and to unlock technology learning.

We need your help this year! Tickets are currently on sale at [www.fsd157c.org](http://www.fsd157c.org) via RevTrak for our 2019 Casino Night Fund-



raising Event. If you attended last year, you already know what a fun night out it is! Please join us for an opportunity to mingle with other parents, local business and political leaders, teachers and administrators while raising funds to inspire more growth. With your generous support, we can continue to make dreams come true for our teachers and students in District 157-C.

For more information about our Education Foundation or how to become a sponsor or to donate to the Education Foundation, please contact me at (815) 414-1177 or email at [allisonmarketti@yahoo.com](mailto:allisonmarketti@yahoo.com). I look forward to seeing you on Friday, March 8th at The Odyssey in Tinley Park!

Sincerely,  
Allison Marketti, President



**Frankfort C.C. School District 157-C**

Administrative Office  
10482 Nebraska Street  
Frankfort, Illinois 60423

Telephone (815) 469-5922  
www.fsd157c.org  
www.facebook.com/frankfort157c

Non-profit Organization  
STD MAIL  
CAR-RT SORT  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Permit #17  
Frankfort, IL 60423-2235

**I N S P R A** Award-winning  
newsletter

**SUPERINTENDENT**  
Dr. Maura J. Zinni

POSTAL CUSTOMER  
FRANKFORT, ILLINOIS 60423

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
Gina Briese, President  
Tom Reidy, Vice President  
Edie Adamski, Secretary  
Brett Cosich, Member  
Dr. Larry Kociolek, Member  
Edith Lutz, Member

**EDITOR**  
Meredith Dobes

**Inside This Issue...**

- ◆ District maintains balanced budget, Board approves \$3 million abatement
- ◆ Music programs teach students value of perseverance, teamwork, play
- ◆ Education Foundation's Casino Night set for March 8, 2019
- ◆ A letter from the Foundation president

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of District 157-C is to prepare all students to be confident, life-long learners and productive citizens by challenging them to reach their fullest potential and by providing a quality educational environment in partnership with family and community.

**KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION SET FOR MARCH 5 AT GRAND PRAIRIE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



Frankfort School District 157-C invites children who will be eligible to begin kindergarten this fall and their parents to attend kindergarten registration between noon-8 p.m. Tuesday, March 5, at Grand Prairie Elementary School, 10480 W. Nebraska St. in Frankfort.

Children who live within district boundaries and who will be at least 5 years old on or before September 1, 2019, are eligible to begin kindergarten at Grand Prairie in the fall.

Parents are asked to bring their child's legal birth certificate and three proofs of residency, one primary and two secondary, to the registration. Primary proofs of residency include a most recent real estate tax bill, signed lease or closing statement. Secondary proofs of residency include a driver's license, utility bill, public aid card, voter registration card, home insurance certificate, auto registration or telephone bill.

For more information about the kindergarten registration process, contact the District Office at 815-469-5922.

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

**February 15**  
Teacher Institute Day - No School

**February 18**  
Presidents' Day - No School

**February 20**  
Board of Education Meeting, 7 PM

**March 1**  
School Improvement Day - Early Dismissal

**March 20**  
Board of Education Meeting, 7 PM

**March 25-March 29**  
Spring Break - No School

**April 17**  
Board of Education Meeting, 7 PM

**April 19 & April 22**  
No School

**TWO AT-RISK PRESCHOOL SCREENINGS REMAIN FOR SCHOOL YEAR**

Parents of children who may benefit from additional educational and developmental skills support prior to kindergarten are welcome to bring their children to one of two remaining At-Risk Preschool Screenings this school year.

The screenings are scheduled for March 14 and May 14, and appointments are available by contacting Renae Kasper at (815) 806-4026. Children must be at least 3 years old by the screening date, and screenings are open only to children residing in or attending a parochial school in District 157-C boundaries.

Screenings are designed to assess a child's development in areas of speech/language, fine and gross motor skills, and concepts/pre-readiness skills. These screenings will determine if a child has a developmental delay that would require special intervention or if a child is eligible for the district's At-Risk Preschool Program or Project B.E.G.I.N.