

Financial Advisory Committee Report

In previous issues of The Vision and in numerous reports to the Board of Education, Avoca School District's challenging financial situation has been outlined. This summer a Financial Advisory Committee of teachers, parents/guardians, and community members (including a local real estate broker and a banker) reviewed District finances and issued a report to the Board. The full 16-page report can be found by going to the District website (www.avoca37.org), clicking on the Board of Education tab, then finding the agenda (Meetings-Documents tab) for the August 12, 2021 Board meeting.



Highlights:

- The District's financial status is "Early Warning" as rated by the State Board of Education, the second-lowest of four, making Avoca one of only 17 such districts out of 852 in Illinois with this low rating
- Avoca has the lowest financial reserves (by many millions) compared to any nearby district
- Avoca has the lowest property tax rate compared to any nearby district
- Avoca has faced an operating deficit for years and will continue to do so for two or more years
- Avoca's capital fund will be empty after this year
- The District will have to use reserves to fund substantial capital maintenance
- Four pathways to financial improvement were outlined in the report

The Committee made no recommendations to the Board. The District encourages every community member to read the full report and to attend the Town Hall Meetings on October 20 and November 10 in order to learn more about the current state of the District.

The Pandemic: Then and Now *(continued)*

social distancing, rapid antigen testing in school for individuals when appropriate, and ongoing cleaning and PPE. Additionally, to respond to the last 20 months of disruption, we have allocated additional federal funding in a few specific areas:

- iPads to improve access for 5th grade students
- Northwestern University partnership on SEL and Professional Learning Communities
- After School Supplemental Learning
- Flexible Furniture Options to Maximize Learning and Social Distancing
- Tents for Outdoor Learning
- Additional Instructional Assistant
- Additional PPE Supplies, etc

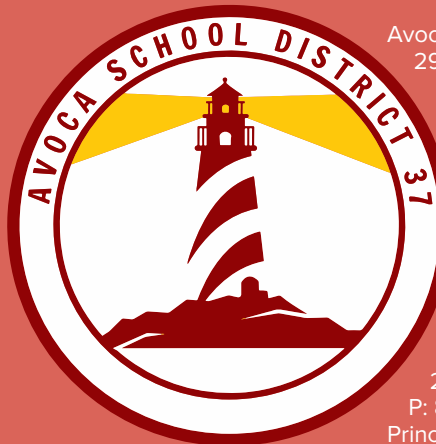
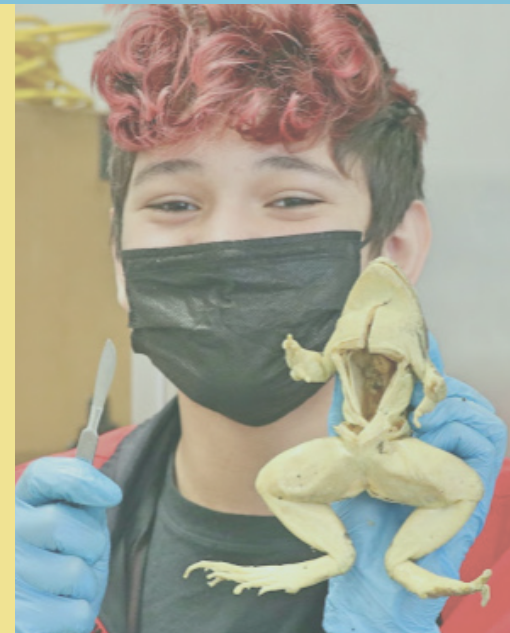


The Pandemic: Then and Now

The onslaught of the pandemic over the last 18 months has taken a toll on every single community member, and possibly no one more than our students and our staff. During the course of the pandemic, we created time for Social Emotional Learning to be a focus with our students, particularly through "morning meetings" at Avoca West and an Advisory period at Marie Murphy. For staff, the Administration did its best to support staff members' need to exercise self-care and reduce as much as possible the incredibly

stressful situation of teaching in different modalities, three different schedules in one year, all while facing their own personal concerns with COVID. Additionally, we expended close to \$300,000 on additional staff, technology, Personal Protective Equipment, cleaning supplies and other mitigation measures.

COVID is still with us, but we are in school every day and doing everything we can to make in-person learning as safe, healthy, and engaging as possible. Our mitigation measures require masks,



Avoca School District 37
2921 Illinois Road, Wilmette IL, 60091
P: 847-251-3587
Superintendent, Kaine Osburn
www.avoca37.org

Avoca West Elementary School
235 Beech Drive, Glenview IL 60025
P: 847-724-6800
Principal, Jessica Hutchison

Marie Murphy School
2921 Illinois Road, Wilmette IL 60091
P: 847-251-3617
Principal, Elena Ryan

Mark Your Calendar

Parents, Guardians, Staff, Students, and especially community members who do not have students in Avoca Schools - You are all invited:

Town Hall Meeting 1 - Student & Staff Learning, Achievement, and Wellbeing
Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 7p.m.
Marie Murphy Gym
2921 Illinois Rd. Wilmette, IL 60091

Town Hall Meeting 2 - Facilities, Learning Environments, and District Finances
Wednesday, November 17, 2021 at 7 p.m.
Marie Murphy Gym
2921 Illinois Rd. Wilmette, IL 60091

Hear a presentation on the topic listed, then take a brief survey and participate in a focus group. Your feedback will shape the Strategic Plan Committee's Needs Assessment and subsequent strategic plan.

Connect with Us



Avoca School District 37: @avoca37
Avoca West: @avocawest37
Avoca Community Preschool: @avocaprek



Avoca West: @avocawest37
Marie Murphy: @mariemurphysch
Avoca District 37: @avocaosburn



Avoca District 37: @avocaosburn



Fall 2021

The Vision

Avoca School District 37 Newsletter



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Advance Avoca

Thank you for reading the Fall 2021 issue of The Vision, the community newsletter from Avoca School District 37. This newsletter goes to every household in the Avoca community, not just households with students. Why? Because every community member has a stake in the success of our schools and we want every community member to know about the amazing success of our schools and the challenges we face, which we can only face together.

Since March 2020, few things have been as challenging as educating young people. However, faced with daunting and ever-changing circumstances, the parents, guardians, staff, and students at Avoca schools came together and made it possible for learning to continue.

Now, as schools are back in session full time, every day, in-person, we will look ahead together and determine our collective future as a community invested in its schools. This issue is dedicated to highlighting our successes, our challenges, and inviting you to take part in the steps necessary to Advance Avoca into its next phase of success and growth.

Superintendent's Greeting



Dr. Kaine Osburn
District Superintendent

The ongoing pandemic has made being superintendent among the most challenging leadership jobs imaginable and has often left me at a loss for words. However, the last 18 months have not taken from me my faith in our community's commitment to caring for students and their learning.

The District was able to operate school in 2020-21 in person more than 50% of the typical schedule, while providing robust remote learning for part of the time or providing that remote learning full time for families who chose it. We did this in a way that kept our students and staff healthy and safe: While we did have positive COVID cases of students and staff, there were *no recorded cases of COVID being transmitted in the schools*.

Everyone agrees that it is best to be back in person full time, especially now that more than 95% of our staff is vaccinated, and most of our eligible students are also vaccinated. We have made adjustments this year so we can conduct school safely and we will continue to face challenges, but our empathy for each other, our flexibility in how we respond to crises, and our reliance on a sense of community will continue to keep us together as we finally emerge from the pandemic.

In this issue, we will share highlights of our last 18 months and we will ask you to engage with the District in the coming months as we seek the community's collective insight into building our schools for the future. Whether it is about facilities, finances, or learning programs, we need to hear from you in order to set a course for the future.

Please read this issue carefully, and if you can attend our Town Hall meetings on October 20 and November 17, we would be grateful for your participation.

Yours,



"2021-2022 Avoca Board of Education from left to right: Dan Seals; Sarah Balassa; Dr. Ami Desai Das; Gil Gibori; Dr. Gretchen Glader; Vice President, Louise Dechovitz; and President, Dr. Sumitrajit Dhar"

Meet the Board of Education

Avoca School District 37 is a vibrant community. The opening of a new academic year is special and the Avoca School District 37 Board of Education members look forward to serving its diverse community of stakeholders. The Board of Education is governed by seven elected officials, from current district parents to parents of alumni and even empty-nesters – all of whom share the same vision of excellence for their students.

To learn more about the individual Board Members who serve the Avoca District community, view the 2021-2022 Board schedule, review past meetings, or access a wealth of other information, please visit our website at https://www.avoca37.org/board_of_education.

The Board of Education welcomes and encourages community participation during Board meetings, which typically take place twice a month in the Joseph M. Porto Community Room, located at Marie Murphy School, 2921 Illinois Road, Wilmette, IL 60091 at 6:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted. For those who

cannot attend in person, all meetings are live-streamed and accessible from the homepage of the Avoca School District 37 website at www.avoca37.org.

Need to contact us? Reach out to the Superintendent's Office at 773-728-4128 or email avocaboard@avoca37.org.

Community Engagement & Strategic Planning

The District's previous strategic plan expired at the end of last year. Now is the time for us to come together as a community and identify the future state of Avoca District 37 and what path needs to be taken to arrive at that future state. Whether you are a parent/guardian, student, staff member, or community member, the future of the District depends on your participation. A Strategic Plan Committee made up of parents/guardians, staff, and Board members is convening to develop two presentations to the community that will outline the current state of the District and seek your feedback on what is going well, what needs to be improved, and what our students'

future should look like. Most important will be two Town Hall meetings, each covering different aspects of the District. Each Town Hall presentation is followed by participants completing an online survey then participating in focus groups that provide more in-depth feedback. The survey and focus group feedback then informs the work of the Strategic Plan Committee in building a focused plan for the future of the district. Again, please make sure you attend both of these meetings. Presentations will be recorded and posted afterward, including with a survey link, but attending in-person will make it possible for you to

provide the fullest feedback possible. We need to hear from every resident who can attend:

Wednesday, October 20, 2021 7 p.m.
Marie Murphy Gym
2921 Illinois Rd. Wilmette

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 7 p.m.
Marie Murphy Gym
2921 Illinois Rd. Wilmette

Seating will adhere to social distance guidelines and masking will be required. If public health concerns arise, the meetings will be held via ZOOM. If you have any questions, please email Dr. Osburn at osburnk@avoca37.org

Board President's Greeting

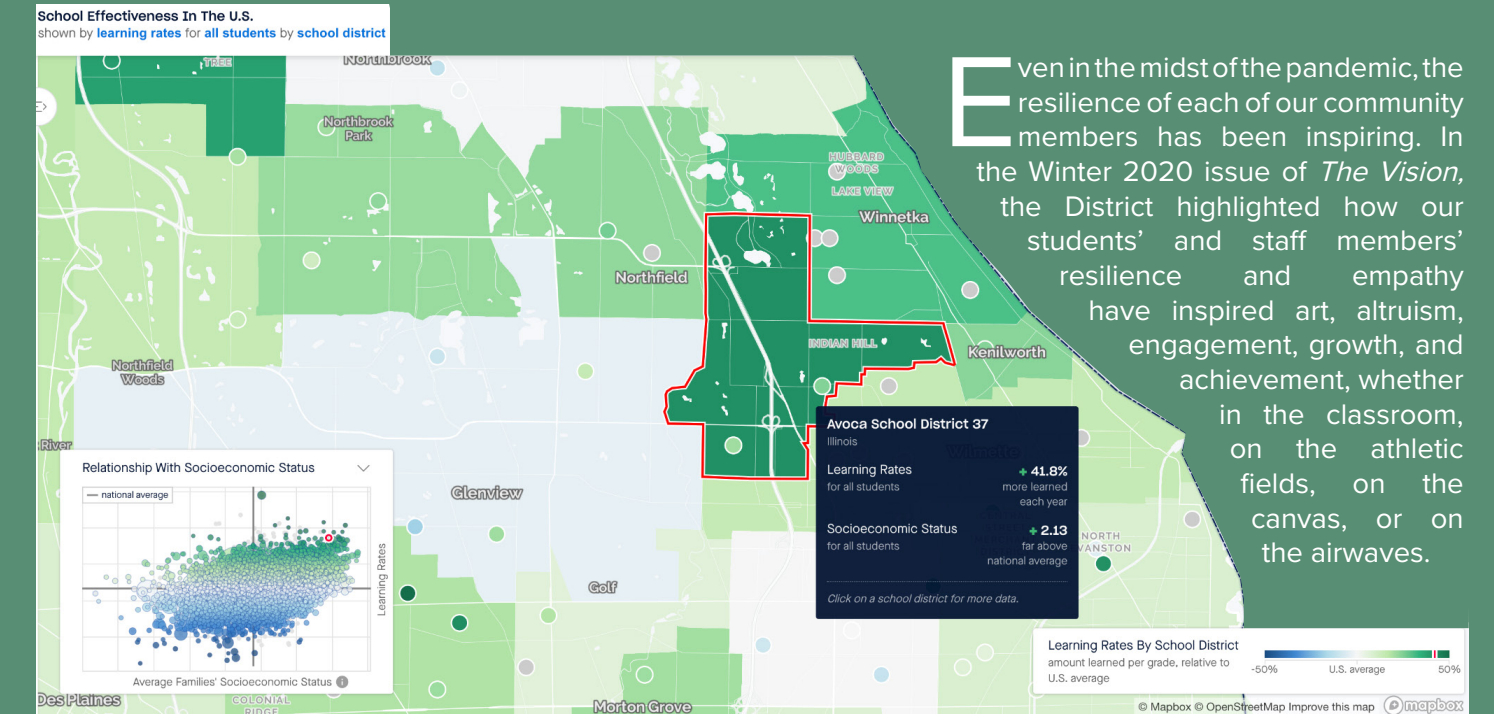


Dr. Sumitrajit Dhar
District Board President

Twenty unprecedented months and counting. The uncertainties have only strengthened our resolve. The limitations have unleashed our creativity. Our community has supported each other. Our teachers, staff, and leadership have exuded innovation and dedication. Business as usual it certainly was not, but our schools have left no stone unturned to continue the journey of education.

While we continue to navigate the windy ways of this pandemic, it is time to look to the horizon as well. The impactful work of the financial advisory committee must be used as a launchpad for the next strategic planning process. Let's challenge ourselves to build and then execute a plan that is as innovative as our wonderful teachers, staff, and school leaders. Let's build a plan that matches the ambition of the Avoca community. And let's reach for a plan that is worthy of the talents of our students.

Grow, Achieve, Advance



Even in the midst of the pandemic, the resilience of each of our community members has been inspiring. In the Winter 2020 issue of *The Vision*, the District highlighted how our students' and staff members' resilience and empathy have inspired art, altruism, engagement, growth, and achievement, whether in the classroom, on the athletic fields, on the canvas, or on the airwaves.

And through it all, we should remember that for academic achievement our District remains among the best in the nation. In addition to one of the best strings programs in Illinois, extensive elective opportunities, and our well-developed offerings in Science, our core academic learning is second-to-none.

Recent work by Sean Reardon and The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University set out to identify districts where achievement AND student growth are demonstrably higher. To the right is a screen shot from The Educational Opportunity Project website map application, which highlights school districts by their achievement on standardized tests and their relative achievement and growth compared to districts nationwide and right next door.

The dark green you see and the pop up navy screen show that Avoca students not only achieve at a higher rate, but their academic growth increases at a higher rate than students in surrounding districts (based on data through 2018). If you go to this site www.edopportunity.org/explorer you will be able to use the map function to zero in on our District and any district in the country to see the added-value students experience at Avoca can provide compared to other school districts in terms of standardized achievement.

Please come to the Community Engagement sessions on October 20 and November 17 (see page 3 of this issue) to learn more about the Districts strengths and where we can still grow, with your feedback helping shape that future growth.

