

District News:

Fund 73:

The Durand School District Board of Education approved the establishment of a Fund 73 Trust Account as an opportunity to address the Other Post Retirement Benefits (OPEB) that the district pays to its retiring teachers. These retirement benefits consist of health insurance premiums paid for the retiring teacher until they reach Medicare eligibility.

Annually, the district pays these premiums, and running the dollars through a Fund 73 allows the district to not only collect equalized aid on the expenditure, but also categorical aid for that dollar amount deemed for special education teachers. This will allow the District to realize additional aid dollars without spending any additional money. If the Board elects to contribute additional money to be used for future years, the fund provides interest at a money market rate. The Fund 73 is a very fiscally intelligent tool allowing the district to not only collect additional state aid on an expenditure they're already making, but the opportunity to earn interest to help pay future premiums.

The Fund 73 account is NOT associated with the Wisconsin Retirement System in any way. Fund 73 deals with the post retirement benefit of health insurance premiums as dictated by the teacher contract. WRS is the educator's pension plan.

When reading a recent letter to the editor, the facts were misrepresented, by stating that the Board deposited the entire 07-08 budget surplus (\$349,000) into this Fund 73. Absolutely inaccurate. The Board clearly stated that we would use the Fund 73 for current, pay-as-you-go dollars for the purpose of collecting additional aid. The Board, who are the Fund Trustees, did not approve or allocate any additional dollars at this time, to be deposited into the Fund 73 money market for future liabilities. If they elect to start funding this liability, it will require board action.

Academic Decathlon:

Congratulations once again to our Academic Decathlon team of students and teachers. The AD team advanced to the Regional competition which will be held on Friday, January 9, 2009. Wisconsin is the fourth largest competing state in the nation with 107 registered teams for 2008-2009. An academic decathlon team consists of 9 full-time high school students, grades 9 through 12, and is made up of three Honor students (3.75 - 4.0 GPA), three students in the Scholastic (3.0 - 3.74 GPA) and three in the Varsity (0.0 - 2.99 GPA) category. All nine students write tests and the top two scores in each category determine the team score. The AD program offers the appeal of mental competition at all achievement levels.

The Local competition consisted of six tests of academic strength, including: Art, Economics, Language and Literature, Mathematics, Music and Social Studies. At the Regional competition, students will also be required to give a Prepared and an Impromptu Speech, have a personal interview, and write an essay.

Congratulations to our coaches, Barb Kallstrom and Kris Ingli, and to our students, Lindsey Lien, Clarissa Norberg, Matthias Traun, Calli Anibas, Elias Monty, Bridgette Beck, Rebecca Baader, Cody Lipke, and Even Peterson. Best of luck at the Regionals! I know you will make Durand proud.

When in Rome:

I wish everyone had taken the opportunity to take in the Junior - Senior High School play "When in Rome", under the direction of Mr. J. Henry Gingras. The students sang and danced their way into an evening of entertainment and laughter. The beautiful set designs and costumes added to the pleasure of the evening. The student actors, set designers, technology personnel, costume designers and makers, and parents put in an exorbitant amount of hours preparing and rehearsing. What a wonderful evening it was.

Winter Sports:

Following a successful Fall sports season, the Winter Sports calendar is upon us. Basketball and Wrestling teams have started their preparation for their games and matches. With the fan base coming indoors, we remind everyone to help us continue with the Sportsmanship initiative we've been working on the last few years. We will continue with the philosophy of "let the players play, the coaches coach, the officials officiate, and the fans be good sports". We appreciate your help in this learning experience for the kids. We certainly appreciate the time and commitment that our coaches put in preparing our student athletes for the season. We trust that you will avoid the temptation to criticize the coaches, players or officials as they try to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. The close proximity of indoor sports tends to lead us to becoming 'vocal experts' once the game begins. I'm not sure how our teams will do win/lose wise, but I do know that no one will care more about our students than the Durand coaches.