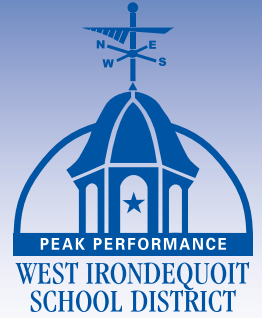


# “The Quote”



web: [www.westirondequoit.org](http://www.westirondequoit.org)

March 2021

## Letter from the Superintendent

Welcome to the newest edition of our community newsletter, The Quote. Based on feedback, we have added an additional issue of our publication as part of our communication package. Our goal: To keep you well-informed. As I have come to learn in West Irondequoit, “Each child belongs to all of us,” making the art of teaching and learning a team effort.

We cannot effectively support our students in realizing their best selves without a strong partnership with our parents/guardians.

Despite the pandemic, we continue to make strides to support the whole child. We know that fostering social, emotional and mental wellness is critical to help students reach their peak performance. Striking this balance is what our children need to be healthy, high-functioning, college and career-ready young adults who are prepared to take on each challenge in an ever-changing world. The following pages offer highlights of our curricular and instructional work. We hope our work reflects our community’s commitment to ensure an equitable and inclusive experience free of bias; one that is anchored by nurturing relationships where every child sees themselves reflected.

On the back cover is also important event information and dates regarding the District Budget Vote on Tuesday, May 18th. Look for



Supt. Johnson with Rogers Middle School students Delaney, Keyana, Morgan, Amelia and Rachel, who formed their own Book Club.

more information in our annual Budget Quote in early May.

Thank you for your ongoing engagement and dedication to our schools. This year’s success is a direct reflection of our ability to work together. In partnership, there is no mountain we cannot overcome.

Sincerely,

Aaron R. Johnson, Ed. D  
Superintendent of Schools

## Curriculum shifts, diverse perspectives in West Irondequoit

As educators, it is our honor and responsibility to foster the development of a strong sense of personal identity and independence in all students. That is why the West Irondequoit Central School District has implemented crucial initiatives into our core, daily instruction, such as the integration of social-emotional learning and culturally responsive and antiracist educational practices.

We are developing an inclusive instructional program and have shifted from compartmentalized diversity in education to ensure all students develop positive identities as a result of their daily learning. This year we have partnered with Dr. Jevon Hunter (Buffalo State), who gave the keynote at our Faculty and Staff Opening. He has

worked closely with our leadership and we hope to have him work directly with teachers this spring regarding cultural relevant pedagogy.

Over the past three years, our K-12 Social Studies teachers have embraced in-depth curriculum work, drawing from both the NYS Social Studies Framework Standards and the NYS Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework. As a result, we are making important steps toward ensuring that the historical narratives and concepts taught in our classrooms are inclusive of diverse perspectives. In ELA, the modifications of curriculum have come largely through implementing Science-Based Literacy Instruction across K-4 classrooms, ensuring all students have equitable access to

*Continued on page 3*

**BUDGET VOTE DETAILS ON BACK COVER!**

# Mrs. Miga appointed Asst. Superintendent for Instruction



Mrs. Christina Miga has worked in education for 17 years, the last 16 in West Irondequoit.

Mrs. Christina Miga was appointed the WICSD's new Assistant Superintendent for Instruction on Feb. 4 and she began her new role on March 1. The position was created following the 2020 departure of our Deputy Superintendent, who oversaw Human Resources as well as Curriculum and Instruction. The process included a thorough review by outside consultants of the District's organizational structure for Curriculum and Instruction.

Mrs. Miga had been the K-6 Director of Instruction for seven years. Ms. Kim Cristal, the K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator, will serve in that role on an interim basis until the position is filled by July 1, 2021.

"For more than 15 years, I've had the privilege to work alongside our outstanding staff, parents and community members who are all committed to student success," Miga said. "As I enter this new position, I look forward to creating alignment, clarity and empowerment through curriculum and instruction together." 📖

"Mrs. Miga is a proven and well-respected leader who has the skill to take our K-12 curriculum to the next level." – Dr. Aaron Johnson, Superintendent of Schools



## Students, staff help each other through 'PEAK' Days

Wednesdays are "PEAK" Days for many Irondequoit High School and Dake Jr. HS students. What does that mean? In a school year pulled apart by a pandemic, when the entire student body is never in the building at the same time, PEAK days bring together students virtually so they feel connected and supported. They're weekly relationship-building check-ins with peers and staff throughout the building on the only day of the week when the vast majority of our students learn remotely.



Allyson Mongeon, IHS



Taiden Makubire, Dake

## Music Performances this Spring!

Similar to the relaunch of interscholastic sports, West Irondequoit is working to provide more opportunities this spring for our traditionally strong music programming. As long as COVID-19 cases remain in check, we are planning to include concerts that will be live streamed so families can watch from home. There may even be a small ticketed audience, again, similar to athletics. We will follow all safety protocols for student performers and audience members, just as we have done throughout this school year. Stay tuned to our social media channels for more information and, we hope, links to live performances. 📖

## Promoting Excellence And Kindness



PEAK stands for "Promoting Excellence And Kindness," and is a word-play on our district motto, "Peak Performance." PEAK Days also align with the District's focus on social-emotional health and learning.

"I feel like it's a way to vent, almost," says Taiden Makubire, a Dake Jr. High School eighth-grader. "If I am stressed about math, if

I have too much work," a PEAK advisor may say "go to your teacher and do that with her. It kind of calmed me."

"Recently we talked about uncomfortable situations and what we (as students) are supposed to do during that," says IHS sophomore Allyson Mongeon, who added that she "really likes this (program) ... I've learned a lot from the seniors."

Watch a video about PEAK Days under "Latest News" on the District website. 📖

## Quote Notes

### FILL OUT FOOD SERVICE APPLICATION

Although the USDA has announced that all breakfasts and lunches will be free to all students for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, we are advising all parents to fill out a free and reduced application anyway. If you are approved, the benefit will carry over for the first month and a half of the 2021-2022 school year. Free and Reduced applications can be found at [www.westirondequoit.org](http://www.westirondequoit.org) under “Food Services,” West Irondequoit District Office, 321 List Ave., and also in the Main Office of all schools.

### KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

The deadline to register a child for the 2021-22 school year is April 1st. Our virtual orientations were held in February. Letters with information were mailed home and emailed to families with eligible children. Students are eligible for our full-day kindergarten program in September 2021 if they will be 5 years of age on or before Dec. 1, 2021. In response to COVID-19 restrictions, registration is accepted by emailing completed forms and supporting documentation to the District Registrar at [jane\\_csaszar@westiron.monroe.edu](mailto:jane_csaszar@westiron.monroe.edu) or by mailing them to 321 List Avenue, Rochester, NY 14617. Questions? Call Mrs. Csaszar at 336-6743.

### HONORING OUR ROOTS

“The West Irondequoit Central School District acknowledges the Indigenous People of this region and that this school (or district building) sits on the ancestral homelands of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It is on these ancestral and treaty lands that we teach, learn and live.” Those words are now read before each public event, such as Board of Education meetings and varsity athletic events, in our District. This statement not only honors our roots but also aligns with developing a more culturally-aware curriculum that is also being fostered through “Heritage Months,” such as Latinx and LGBTQ+ awareness in October and Women’s History Month in March.

## Black History: Loaded with learning

At Dake Junior High, students led discussions about the impact of Daniel Prude’s passing in Rochester and similar current events nationwide. Irondequoit High School students engaged in virtual discussions about racism and allyship.

Our middle school students studied powerful themes in literature, sharing book discussions on Mae Jemison, Jackie Robinson and Shirley Chisholm, among others. They used those to support theme statements such as “changing the world often requires taking risks,” and “no dreams can be achieved without hard work and the support of others.”

From Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and Barack Obama to Jesse Owens, Serena Williams and LeBron James, dozens of elementary students researched famous people of color and did read-a-louds in front of classmates. These are just a few examples of how West Irondequoit celebrated Black History Month in February by providing learning opportunities.

“Change is never easy, but always possible,” was one quotation a Briarwood student pulled from research on former President Obama. “To me,” the student said, “this means changing something is hard but always possible.”

At Briarwood and Colebrook, the halls of several elementary schools were lined with posters of famous African-Americans, and students did “Gallery Walks,” with teachers, as if they were in a museum, to listen, learn and share about the lives of these famous figures.

“You cannot look at a person and judge him or her by the color of their skin,” said another Briarwood second-grader, quoting civil rights activist Ruby Bridges. “To me,” the student continued, “this means you can’t be mean to people who have different color skin than you.”

## Curriculum shifts *Continued from the cover*

literacy instruction during these formative years. To support the development of strong student identities, K-12 ELA teachers continue to engage in re-evaluating literature choices to make sure that diverse voices and perspectives are consistently used. To promote this work, our district has established the “Strong Voices Project.” It’s a three-phase plan to support instructional shifts that foster the strong development of every students’ sense of identity and agency through Humanities Instruction, as well as authentic and engaging Heritage Month learning experiences. An additional component of this work is an ongoing shift in Humanities instruction to focus on supporting civic readiness, ensuring every student is prepared to use their voice to share their perspective and advocate for their needs and values.

Another important step forward we have taken is through our involvement in the Monroe County Race, Class and Inequities Inquiry Project, which will yield four local history-based instructional tools to be used in our 8th and 11th grade Social Studies classes. To expand on this work, we are also partnering with Pathstones Antiracist Curriculum Project to train our teachers to implement instruction that will dive deeply into our local history of redlining.

We already are excited to see our students respond to these changes, expressing their increased interest in learning about perspectives other than their own, as well as in learning about their own heritage in new and positive ways.



2nd grader Elliott Giannavola gave his Black History Month presentation on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Mrs. Dena Kropman’s class at Southlawn School



**Superintendent**  
Dr. Aaron R. Johnson

**Board of Education**  
Mr. David Long, President  
Mr. Matthew Metras, Vice President  
Mrs. Ann Cunningham  
Mr. Matthew Fink  
Dr. Meg Steckley  
Mr. Matthew Sullivan  
Mr. John Vay  
Mrs. Patricia Kelly, District Clerk  
Ms. Grace Loeser, Student Representative  
Mr. Ethan Riestler, Student Representative  
Ms. Claire Steckley, Student Representative

**Newsletter Editor**  
Mr. Jeffrey DiVeronica

## Annual District Vote & Election

**Tuesday, May 18, 2021**  
**6 a.m. – 9 p.m.**

**Vote Location:**  
**St. Paul Blvd. Fire Dept.**  
**433 Cooper Rd.**

**Candidates' Night:**  
**Monday, May 3, 7 p.m. - via Zoom**

There are three Board of Education positions up for election this year. Candidates' nominating petitions are due to the district clerk by 5 p.m. April 19.

**Budget Hearing:**  
**Thursday, May 6, 7 p.m.**

The Board of Education will hold a Budget Hearing to share details of the proposed budget. Additional presentations may be scheduled, check the district Web site ([westirondequoit.org](http://westirondequoit.org)) or call 585-336-3067 for updates. There will be opportunities to ask questions at the Budget Hearing.

### Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots are available for those who qualify, contact District Clerk Patricia Kelly at 585-336-2983 or [patricia\\_kelly@westiron.monroe.edu](mailto:patricia_kelly@westiron.monroe.edu).

**Questions?** Call 585-342-5500

## Facilities look toward safety and security upgrades

Our District-level Facilities Planning Committee meets monthly to engage in forward-thinking plans tied to the overall physical safety and infrastructure of our district. It recommends to the Board of Education: Major capital projects (like the recently completed Renewal Project); Smaller capital outlay projects (such as \$100,000 projects); and upgrades to safety, security and technology-related infrastructure

Two items the Committee has been focused on for 2020-21 are the Smart-Bond Spending Plan and investigating future options for our aging Department of Environmental Services building. "DOES" is located on Washington Avenue.

New York voters approved the Smart Schools Bond Act, which awarded \$2 billion to public schools in 2014. That included \$1.9 million allocated to West Irondequoit. There were several areas that schools are able to expend the funds, however, most are tied to improvements to technology as well as school safety/security. Last year, we submitted a plan to the state for approval of a portion of these funds and in September we received authorization to expend approximately \$900,000 to: 1) Replace our existing analog security cameras with modern digital cameras, and 2) Install an incident response system in each school building to expedite an automatic lock down in case of an immediate threat or emergency. These projects are in the design and implementation phase and are expected to be completed in the Spring of 2021.

We are now considering future projects to recommend including the replacement of our varied phone systems with a modern IP based phone system, upgrading the Public Address systems in our buildings and additional security cameras (interior/exterior) to improve coverage and address areas that lack camera coverage. 📞