

D211 POST: THREE FORMER SUPERINTENDENTS VISIT DISTRICT 211



From left to right: Dr. Richard Kolze, Dr. Nancy Robb, Dr. Dan Cates, and Dr. Gerald Chapman.

Township High School District 211 prides itself on providing students with the highest quality education and opportunities. Building a strong reputation did not happen overnight. It is the product and impact of each staff member under the leadership of the superintendent that led to the District's success and reputation.

To celebrate the District 211 legacy, Superintendent of Schools Dan Cates recently invited three local former superintendents to visit the school district and discuss their time in District 211.

Collectively, the four superintendents have more than 100 years of experience served in District 211, with more than 40 combined years served as superintendent. Dr. Richard Kolze began working in District 211 in 1957 and served as superintendent from 1970 – 1990. Dr. Gerald Chapman started in District 211 in 1965 and served as superintendent from 1990 – 2001. Dr. Nancy Robb began her District 211 career in 1980 and served as superintendent from 2009 – 2014. Dr. Cates entered District 211 in 1992 and has served as superintendent since 2014.

While each superintendent's tenure contributed different initiatives within the

District's evolution, they shared a common thread – providing the highest quality opportunities possible for students and the community. Each superintendent similarly described the charge and responsibility of upholding the legacy built by each of their predecessors and the importance of fulfilling the trust provided to the District by community members.

“Trust is something that I hold as a priceless commodity,” said Dr. Cates during a round-table discussion. *“We have always provided extraordinary opportunities and there is always that next level to achieve. Early on in my career, I sensed we are always pushing for the next best thing. Innovation and expansion to more opportunities were just inherent.”*

When discussing the fondest memories of their time in District 211, all the superintendents reminisced about the students and people they encountered each day on the job. Dr. Robb shared a story during her time as principal at Palatine High School. *“After 9/11, students came to me because they wanted to make a flag that would be as large as the football field, so when planes started to fly again it could be seen. We had a flag ceremony and invited the community, students, and staff. The power of students working together in a very difficult situation, and making something good come from it, I will never forget.”*

Each superintendent had a connection to the community and to each other. Dr. Kolze mentioned how a former instructor of his led him to be an educator, and former District 211 Superintendent Gerald A. McElroy helped push him to success. Dr. Chapman credited Dr. Kolze's positive influence for his success as a developing administrator, ultimately leading to the role of superintendent. Dr. Robb mentioned that Dr. Kolze also hired her for her first administrative position and Dr. Chapman encouraged her to consider being superintendent. Following the same cycle, Dr. Cates expressed gratitude to Dr. Chapman and Dr. Robb for hiring him and setting him on the path to becoming superintendent. *“When you get older you don't think about thanking the people who did so much for you,”* said Dr. Kolze. *“I am here because someone helped me to college, McElroy pulled me along the way. You shouldn't miss those opportunities to thank people who helped you along the way.”*

As the District continues planning for the future and prepares students to be college and career ready, Dr. Cates and the former superintendents see great opportunities in store. *“Every generation and every decade provide a different need,”* Dr. Chapman said. *“The most difficult thing is to recognize what those needs are going to be, and how we are going to be at the forefront of it. We have a great track record of that and keep exceeding. That didn't happen by accident. We want to have a strong academic program and a strong athletic program. Both of those are good for kids.”*

Their work to better the community doesn't stop within District 211. Outside of the District and in retirement, these superintendents have worked in service of their communities. Throughout each of their careers, all four superintendents resided within District 211 boundaries, and still do. Additionally, all have served in community organizations, some of which include the Palatine Rotary Club, Excel Beyond 211, Community Consolidated School District 15, William Rainey Harper College, and the Palatine Chamber of Commerce. Strong community connections help strengthen District 211 and its programs. *“We are fortunate that the community has been very supportive of District 211,”* said Dr. Robb. *“Fundamental to all of that is we have a great staff. You have to hire well to have the staff that's able to carry things out.”*

I believe the staff has worked as a team and everyone has worked together to provide additional educational opportunities for our students."