

# D211 POST: HOFFMAN ESTATES TEACHER NAMED ILLINOIS SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Hoffman Estates High School Special Education teacher Katie McGarvey has been named the 2021 Illinois Special Education Teacher of the Year. McGarvey was told of her selection during a meeting between with Principal Michael Alther, District 211 Superintendent Dr. Lisa Small, and representatives from the Illinois State Board of Education September 21.

As part of this year's Teacher of the Year program, the Illinois State Board of Education added three new categories including Bilingual Teacher of the Year, Early Childhood Teacher of the Year, and Special Education Teacher of the year. With these additions, McGarvey became the state's first Special Education Teacher of the Year recipient.

McGarvey said she was shocked when she was notified that she had been selected.

"I am so honored to have been selected," McGarvey said. "This was incredibly unexpected. I am glad to have the opportunity to represent Hoffman Estates and District 211."

Hoffman Estates High School Special Education Chair Colleen Little said she was glad to see McGarvey's hard work recognized.

"Katie is all about service to others," Little said. "It's been great to see her in action and to see her recognized."

McGarvey has been a teacher at Hoffman Estates High School for the past three years. She said she hopes to continue to grow as a teacher.

“For me, students come first,” she said. “I love seeing them every day, which drives my passion for this job. I hope to use that passion to continue to grow in a way that can always help the students.”

With the announcement of her selection of Special Education Teacher of the Year, McGarvey joins a list of previous District 211 Teacher of the Year recipients Bob Grimm (2001, Fremd High School Science Teacher), Brian Curtin (2012 Schaumburg High School English Teacher), and Steve Elza (2014 Fremd High School Applied Technology Teacher). McGarvey is a graduate of Palatine High School and received her Bachelor’s in Special Education from Loyola University Chicago.

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## D211 POST: STATE GRANT LEADS TO PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR DISTRICT 211



At its February 14 meeting, the High School District 211 Board of Education approved a motion authorizing the District to file for an abatement to the 2018 property tax levy that will reduce total local property taxes by almost \$2 million. The reduction is due to a nearly \$1.3 million grant the District received through the Illinois State Board of Education’s Property Tax Relief Grant. As a recipient of the grant, the District must also reduce the levy by an additional \$0.7 million on top of the grant.

District 211 Chief Operating Officer Lauren Hummel said that homeowners will directly benefit from this levy reduction and will pay less property taxes to

District 211 than would have otherwise occurred without the grant.

The reduction in the levy will decrease the local property taxes received by the District by nearly \$2 million. While approximately \$1.3 will be covered by the grant, Hummel said the remaining funds would be recovered from various sources.

“The remaining \$700,000 difference would be made up from local funds,” Hummel said. “What we are proposing is that when we sell the 62-acre property, we would use proceeds from the sale to make up the difference, or use District reserves to offset the reduction for one year.”

According to the current real estate contract, the sale of the 62-acre property is scheduled to be finalized at the end of June.

Hummel said following the Board’s approval at the February 14 meeting, the District filed an abatement with the Cook County Clerk’s office, which will then issue a Certificate of Abatement to the Illinois State Board of Education. The certificate will serve as proof to the ISBE that District 211 has reduced its levy, qualifying the District for the grant.

She added that this grant is a benefit for both the District and the communities the District serves.

“Any time you can have close to a \$2 million reduction in the amount of taxes levied on the community is certainly positive for the taxpayers,” she said. “And this will not have any impact on any programs or services for students, so that is a great thing. This is just a really positive way to have an impact on the community’s tax bills while continuing to provide exceptional opportunities for our students.”

The impact of the grant will take effect at the time of the fall 2019 property tax bill.

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**FREMD HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER STEVE  
ELZA NAMED 2015 ILLINOIS TEACHER  
OF THE YEAR, ENCOURAGES STUDENTS  
TO FIND HOME IN EDUCATION**



*Steve Elza speaks to Fremd High School students during an assembly on Oct. 27.*

Steve Elza, an Applied Technology teacher at Fremd High School, was recently named the 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year. While students and staff gathered for an assembly to honor his accomplishment, Elza kept the focus on his students and his FHS community.

“As the Illinois Teacher of the Year, it doesn’t mean I am the best teacher in Illinois,” he said to FHS students. “You are surrounded by – and I wasn’t kidding when I said – this is truly one of the best families I could be a part of. As a teacher of the year, I am an advocate for all the teachers here and across the state, but more importantly, for each and every one of you.”

With this honor, Elza said his primary focus is to use the award as a way to be an advocate for other teachers and school districts, and to encourage students to find a home in their education.



*Elza’s primary focus is to use the award as a way to encourage other teachers and school districts to allow students to find a home in their education.*

“My message is finding a home for kids and finding a place where they can find themselves and grow,” he said. “That is my big message. I am here to support all teachers. I have learned that core classes are essential – you need them – but until we give students a home and find a place or program where they can shine, the meaning isn’t there.”

Elza, who has worked in District 211 for seven years, believes that programs such as

automotive are a key component to education. He stresses that students in his classes can take the skillset they learn in the classroom, and apply it to a career in that particular field. He also told his students that when he was in high school, he struggled until he found his passion in an automotive classroom.



*Steve Elza high-fives his students who are getting ready to compete in a national automotive competition in Las Vegas.*

“When I was a freshman, sophomore, and part of my junior year, I didn’t have a reason to come to school,” he told students. “I ditched class, I got bad grades, and it wasn’t until I found my passion in automotive that I found a reason to come to school. I found a reason to do well in English, Math, and Science.”

During the next year, Elza will have a busy schedule that includes speaking engagements, traveling to Washington D.C. to meet President Obama, and Space Camp. Despite the schedule, though, he knows he wants to keep his focus on his students, and other teachers in District 211 and throughout the country.

Watch the video below to see Elza accept his award at the “Those Who Excel” awards banquet on Saturday, October 25, in Bloomington, Ill.

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**FREMD HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER STEVE ELZA IS FINALIST FOR 2015 ILLINOIS TEACHER OF THE YEAR**



*Elza, who has worked at Fremd High School for seven years, is one of 12 finalists for 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year.*

When Steve Elza, applied technology teacher at Fremd High School, first heard about being a 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year finalist, he was speechless.

“I have a passion for what I do with the kids and seeing them succeed, and when someone else sees that passion and says ‘you’re doing a great job and we appreciate what you do,’ it really validates what we all do here. It’s pretty amazing.”

Elza, who has worked at Fremd High School for seven years, is one of 12 finalists for 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year. The State Board annually sponsors the “Those Who Excel” awards to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to the state’s public and non-public schools, and each year selects a Teacher of the Year from a list of outstanding candidates.

An honor like this is one that Elza said is surreal. He said it is a great honor to be recognized for his passion of teaching students because he is doing what he loves to do. He added that sometimes it’s easy for teachers to be unaware of the impact education might have on students, and moments like this validate the job teachers do.

“Anyone who knows me knows that I truly enjoy my job. I love working with students and being able to share my passion for the automotive field with my students is why I do this,” he said. “Fremd is an amazing place to work – from administration and student services, to other teachers – I truly believe we have a family atmosphere here.”

In addition to Elza, District 211 will be well-represented among recipients in the 2014-2015 Illinois State Board of Education’s “Those Who Excel” education awards program.

High School District 211 Those Who Excel award candidates include (listed alphabetically):

- Secretary to the Superintendent Sally Cimmarusti (educational service personnel category)
- Schaumburg High School Head Librarian Susan Elk (student support personnel category)
- William Fremd High School Applied Technology Teacher Steve Elza (classroom teacher category; 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year finalist)
- District 211 Academy-North Teacher Dane Henning (early career educator category)
- James B. Conant High School Assistant Principal Robert Small (school administrator category)
- Hoffman Estates High School SOAR Core Committee (team category)

“Those Who Excel” award recipients will be honored by the Illinois State Board of Education, and the 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year will be named, at the “Those Who Excel” awards banquet on Saturday, October 25, in Bloomington, Ill.

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## DISTRICT 211’S PROGRESS TOWARD MEETING ACADEMIC GOALS IN 2012 – 2013



During the 2012-2013 academic year, District 211 established academic goals for its students that included yearly goals and targets to accelerate academic achievement in various categories. With a focus on student learning and growth, high school standards attainment, high school graduation rate, and college and career readiness, the District’s academic goals reflect changes in the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) accountability system.

Teachers had an opportunity to assess and refine the curriculum during 10 morning work sessions throughout the previous school year, and the Board of Education approved 12 similar sessions for the 2013-2014 academic year at its July 11 meeting. This will help ensure continued growth and work toward improving student success.

Since the first year of monitoring academic goals, there have been improvements in

each of the targeted areas. The first academic goal is directed toward individual student improvement on both enrollment in accelerated coursework and growth within state assessments and the Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS). During the 2012-2013 school year, 44 percent of students enrolled in accelerated coursework, including all honors and advanced placement coursework.

The freshman class of 2013 had 30 percent of its students enrolled in accelerated coursework and by senior year, 47 percent met that goal. The ISBE had set a target of 57.4 percent of students to increase their scores in the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT examinations. District 211 had 77.8 percent of students increase their score by more than half a point or achieved the maximum score of 6.0.

The second academic goal focused on students demonstrating attainment of knowledge and skills defined within local, state, and national high school standards. This is the first year that departments have used District benchmark assessments, which are administered in each course at the end of the learning process to determine whether students have made progress toward mastering critical learning standards. Teachers have already noticed many ways the benchmarks can be improved and used in the future, and will use future morning work sessions as a way to continue reaching goals and increasing the number of test items for assessment.

The third goal strives to have all students, regardless of income-level, race, or educational background, demonstrate on-time graduation from high school. In the Class of 2012, 93 percent of all students graduated within four years of entering high school, and 94 percent of all students graduated within five years of entering high school. ISBE standards indicate that high schools should have 90 percent of its students graduate in four years, and 95 percent within five years.

The final academic goal ensures that all students will demonstrate that they are college and career ready while in high school. District 211 focused on creating more opportunities for all students to be college and career ready. Roughly 50 percent of students in the Class of 2013 participated in at least one advanced placement course. In May 2012, 80 percent of students who completed an advanced placement exam scored a 3, 4, or 5, which makes them eligible for college credit.

Additionally, students have access to dual-credit courses in partnership with Harper College, and enrollment in these courses has increased 7 percent. The Class of 2013 had 72 percent of students meeting the English college readiness benchmark on the ACT exam, and 71 percent meeting the mathematics benchmark. The District plans to continue its efforts to increase student performance on high-stakes tests, which create opportunities after graduation.

Increased morning work sessions will allow time for professional learning teams to conduct work toward achieving each of the District's academic goals. The continued efforts will help ensure future student success, as well as improvement for identifying patterns in student results, asking questions about assessments themselves, instruction, standards of curriculum, using results to guide instructional changes between morning work sessions, and reviewing the impact of adjustments on instruction and student performance.

To read the full report on progress toward meeting academic goals, please visit the District's board docs [website](#).

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# SECOND DAY OF PSAE TESTING EARNS STUDENTS A NATIONAL CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE



When students are making post-graduation plans, it seems a lot of emphasis is put on the ACT exam. This test has influence on whether or not a college or university will grant a student admittance, which can be quite intimidating when one's collegiate plans depend on it.

However, the ACT, which is part of the two-day Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), isn't the only test that influences success after graduation. The WorkKeys Assessment, which takes place on day two of PSAE testing, is composed of three different tests – Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information. Emphasizing the importance of the WorkKeys Assessment, the State of Illinois will issue a National Career Readiness Certificate based on test results.

“This is the first time that Illinois is making this certificate available to students, and we're excited to offer it to our students,” said Terri Busch, assistant superintendent for instruction. “The ACT is an important test for our students. They take it seriously and they know that doing well on it can open doors – it's a life changer. I don't think our students saw any significance on the second day of tests. Now that they see this test can mean something to an employer, day two has significance, too.”

Traditionally, the WorkKeys Assessment consisted of mathematics and reading only. In November, the Illinois State Board of Education approved the addition of the Locating Information exam. This addition measures the skill people use when they are asked to find information or insert information into a graphic.

In order to help students recognize the importance of the exams, National Career Readiness Certificates will serve as a standard for career readiness after graduation. These certificates provide employers with specific information about one's ability to perform common tasks. More than 35 states are implementing programs that use the National Career Readiness Certificate, or a similar model of it.

The certificate is broken into four different categories: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. To receive a Bronze certificate, students must score 3 out of 6 on each of the tests. This certificate tells employers the student has the necessary skills for 16 percent of the jobs in the WorkKeys database. A silver certificate is issued if a student scores 4 or better on each of the tests. This represents that the student has the skills necessary for 67 percent of the jobs in the database. Gold consists of scoring 5 or better on each of the tests. This certificate states the student has skills capable of 93 percent of the jobs in the database. The highest certificate, platinum, requires that a student scores a 6 on each of the tests. This certificate represents that the student has skills capable of 99 percent of the jobs in the database.

Although day two of PSAE testing is nothing new, Busch said the District is helping students aim high on not only the ACT, but also the WorkKeys Assessment for a well-rounded score.

“Nationwide, there is an emphasis on each high school graduate being college and career ready,” Busch said. “The ACT measures college readiness and now Illinois is in line to measure career readiness. Our goal is to have all of our students who take the PSAE earn a National Career Readiness Certificate.”

For more information about the PSAE please visit the [website](#).

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## DISTRICT 211 MEALS MEET, EXCEED NUTRITION GUIDELINES

Preparing school lunches requires a lot of planning and making sure government nutritional standards are met, and High School District 211 has proven that it provides quality meals to its students.

The District received results from The School Meals Initiative Review, which is a nutrition audit of the lunches served within the District done in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education and Southern Illinois University. District 211 met and exceeded expectations for high school lunches.

Nutrition Guidelines	
Calories and Nutrient Levels for School Lunch Enhanced Menu Planning Approach or NoMenus School Week Averages	
Calories	825
Fat (g)	Less than 30%
Saturated Fat (g)	Less than 10%
Protein (g)	16
Calcium (mg)	400
Iron (mg)	4.5
Vitamin A (RE)	300
Vitamin A (IU)	1,500
Vitamin C (mg)	18

[Click to enlarge nutrition chart.](#)

The review looks at every nutritional aspect of school meals and what is being served, including even the ketchup and mustard packets that are handed out. A week of menus is selected for review, and the District provides recipes, labels from food, and production records from what was prepared and served, to be analyzed. Lauren Hummel, director of food services, said District 211 met or exceeded all areas, except that the meals analyzed fell just short of the weekly goal for calories.

“The goal for our meals is that we are at 825 calories, less than 30 percent calories from fat, 10 percent or less of saturated fat, and meet guidelines for Vitamins A, C, calcium and iron,” Hummel said. “We met or exceeded standards on everything, except we fell 60 calories short of our goal over the week-long period. With reduced calorie ranges established by the USDA for next school year and planned increases for portion sizes of fruits and vegetables, we anticipate that the calorie targets will be met.”

The guidelines were created by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). According to the USDA’s calories and nutrient guidelines for enhanced menu planning approaches in the National School Lunch Program, school meals should have 825 calories per week, with less than 30 percent fat and 10 percent saturated fat calories. *(See chart for additional guidelines)*

Although the District is not ranked against other schools, Hummel said District 211 is doing quite well. One thing that surprised the reviewers was the amount of milk consumed at each school. Hummel said it’s roughly 95 percent of students buying a complete lunch at each of the five District high schools.

“One of the things the reviewer commented on was the amount of milk that our students consume,” said Mary O’Connor, assistant director of food service. “They were surprised that our consumption of milk is as high as it is because we have a lot of high school students that drink milk as a part of the meal each day.”

Preparing the menu is looked at day by day, so it ensures all guidelines are met for that week. Part of what makes planning for adequate nutrient consumption difficult is that high schools operate on an “offer versus serve” system, which means students have the ability to decline portions of the meal. This is why creating healthier meals and offering the right combination of foods is so important. Some recipes come from the USDA, but most are from “scratch cooking,” where recipes are created at the schools based on guidelines, taste, and esthetics. Hummel said the District tries different combinations of recipes to make sure they meet guidelines and are appealing to students.

“Creating recipes is a lot of trial and error until we get to where we want to be,” Hummel said. “It can be challenging because, for example, we’re coming up with a vegetarian pasta salad for next year that will count for the protein and grains requirements. It can be made to taste good, but if it doesn’t have enough nutrients to meet guidelines, then we can’t serve it. We experiment with recipes to make sure they meet the components and are student approved.”

For more information about the food audit, contact Lauren Hummel at (847) 755-6680.