

## DISTRICT 202 COMMUNITY COLUMN

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Any way you look at it, this is always an exciting time of the year.

The end of summer usually brings great weather. One or the other of our two Chicago baseball teams is often (well, sometimes) fighting for a playoff spot. And the Chicago Bears are gearing up for another championship season.

But the most exciting thing about this time of year, is the start of school.

The new school year presents a renewed opportunity for hope for the future, in the bright, expectant faces and open minds of our students; faith in our community, our partners in this noble endeavor called education; inspiration through our teachers whose dedication and spirit will shape many lives; and through it all, the magic of learning and teaching, still the most powerful way to create, maintain and ensure a strong, stable, thoughtful and compassionate society.

As they do every year, District 202 classrooms and schools this year overflow with hope, faith, inspiration and magic.

Once again our district will grow by an estimated 2,000 new students. We will likely maintain our standing as the fifth-largest district in all of Illinois with more than 29,000 students and 28 schools.

We will open two new elementary schools and another middle school – the first three of nine new schools to be built by 2011 -- and have hired nearly 300 new teachers.

And yet, our focus as educators is not so much on the numbers of children, but rather on what we are doing for each child who crosses the threshold of one of our schools.

Certainly, we must respect and respond to the challenge that such growth brings -- providing safe and efficient facilities, and appropriate numbers of adults to lead our classrooms. But those issues, important as they are, are mere logistics.

The bigger and most important challenge is to find and exercise every means possible, given our community's resources, to teach, support, nurture, guide, care for and inspire every one of our students.

I am happy and proud to say that District 202 is up to the task.

We have worked hard to create a rigorous, relevant instructional program and appropriate supports and resources to help all of our children learn more and learn better; grow

academically and personally; and to become successful, contributing members of the world that they will inherit and inhabit.

And what could be more exciting than seeing a child learn and grow?

Welcome back to school, thank you to our community for its continued support, and best luck to all of our students, staff and families.

Dr. John Harper  
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