

Avoca School District 37

ANNUAL REPORT 2009–2010





From the Superintendent

Dear Avoca Community,

The 2009-2010 school year was one of the most memorable and rewarding years in my career. By following an ambitious strategic plan and relentlessly pursuing the tenets of Jim Collins' *Good to Great*, Avoca has undeniably become one of the premier school districts in the country. Our commitment to "continuous improvement" over the past eight years has led to numerous initiatives; the coalescing of these efforts is now producing profound results. Student achievement is at a record high, Avoca students are thriving in high school, the District is considered a "lighthouse" of educational excellence by educators from around the country and, despite the severe economic conditions, Avoca's finances are healthy and projected to be stable into the near future. These accomplishments are all measured and documented in Avoca's 2009–2010 Greatness Indicator Report, which will be reviewed and summarized throughout this annual newsletter.

Without the enthusiastic support of the entire school community, these triumphs would not have occurred. The synergy that exists among Avoca parents, community members, teachers, students, administrators and school board members creates a school community that makes everyone proud. All signs point to the 2010-2011 school year being another successful chapter in Avoca's journey from good to great.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joseph Porto

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Dr. Joseph M. Porto
Superintendent

Dr. Deanna D. Reed
Principal, Marie Murphy School

Dr. Kevin M. Jauch
Principal, Avoca West Elementary School

Ms. Cindy Devin
Director of Pupil Services

Mrs. Beth Dever
Business Manager





BOARD MEMBERS

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Rosanne Ullman
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Rick Zelinsky

Joseph Porto
Superintendent & Secretary



From the School Board

Dear Avoca Community:

We are pleased to report another eventful year at Avoca District 37, with some endeavors coming to a successful conclusion and others just starting off with a solid foundation. The District's prevailing culture of accepting nothing less than excellence affords the Board of Education much gratification and multiple opportunities to pursue and complete bold goals.

As always, student achievement remained top priority in 2009-2010, and we were happy to see our students' test scores soaring. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we charge our administrators with carefully analyzing these numbers so that even slight dips and plateaus are addressed; when necessary, we make curricular, staff and procedural adjustments. This attention to detail has served us well in ensuring that all Avoca students realize their potential in every area of study.

This year Avoca had the honor of being chosen by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) as a host site for the association's tech conference. Our administrators and faculty worked long hours to prepare for this site visit, going "above and beyond" in delivering an enlightening, entertaining and practically budget-neutral experience for the full-capacity attendance of educators and board members arriving from all over the country to witness our technology program in action in the classroom. After having the chance to observe Avoca's general approach to education over two full days, our visitors not only shared their admiration for our forward-thinking tech initiatives, but also expressed interest in our innovative master schedule, professional learning communities, Good to Great model and collaboration among all constituencies. Avoca is a lighthouse!

We're delighted as well to report a positive experience with another innovation we tested this year, interest-based-bargaining (IBB). Proceeding in a collegial spirit that addressed the best interests of the entire Avoca community, our negotiations forged a five-year teachers' contract that was completed well before the start of the school year. With our budget's largest expenditure locked in for five years instead of previous contracts' four years, the Board can develop a long-term financial plan.

As we proceeded to tackle the year's immediate tasks, we kept an eye toward the compelling challenge that lies ahead—replacing our superintendent when Dr. Joe Porto retires after the 2010-2011 school year. Toward that end, the Board hired BWP and Associates, a highly regarded search firm that already has made progress toward presenting the Board with superior candidates for the position. We are confident that BWP's diligent work with the Board, coupled with the reputation of Avoca 37 as one of the most desirable elementary school districts in the country, will result in a superb conclusion to our search. While we will be very sad to say goodbye to Dr. Porto, we are confident that we will have in place a superintendent who will deliver equally visionary, collaborative leadership that will enable the Avoca District to continue to thrive in the future.

Sincerely,

Avoca Board of Education



Student Achievement

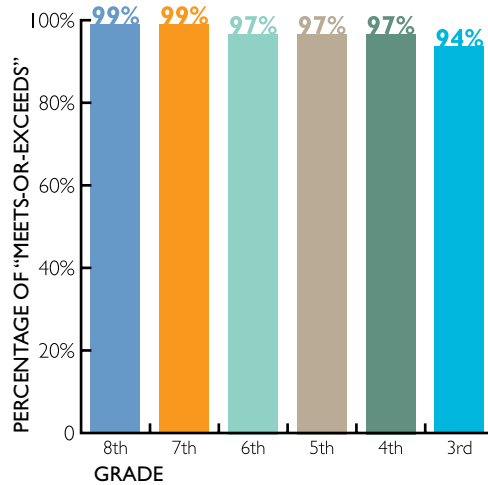
Student achievement scores rose in Avoca during the 2009–2010 school year, marking the fifth consecutive year of growth. As a result, Avoca now ranks 4th in the state and 1st in the township in student achievement. These scores affirm the effectiveness of Avoca’s educational programs and its commitment to continuous improvement. The District uses two tools—the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)—to determine how our students rank against those of other schools.



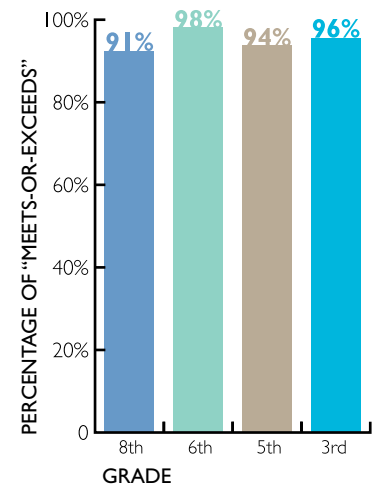
ISAT 2010

ISAT assesses student achievement levels as they compare with state-determined standards and designates each student’s score as “exceeds standards,” “meets standards” or falls “below standards.” In high achieving areas such as New Trier Township, a benchmark for success is that 90% or more of the students reach the meets-or-exceeds range. In 2010, Avoca achieved that benchmark in every one of the 18 tests. The 2010 ISAT results place Avoca in the top 1% of all districts in the State of Illinois.

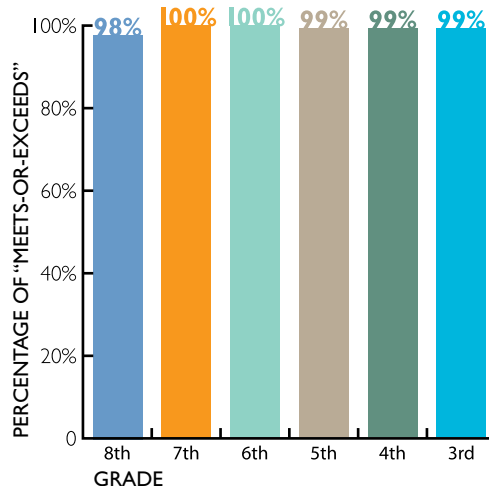
ISAT Reading



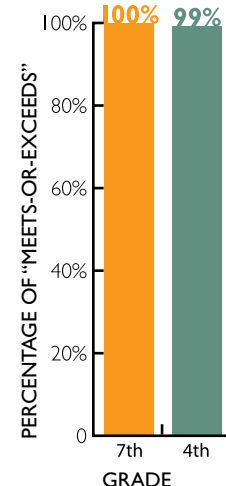
ISAT Writing



ISAT Math



ISAT Science



MAP 2010 (MEASURES OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS)

Unlike ISAT, MAP is a norm-referenced test. Instead of holding Avoca scores against a set standard established by the state, MAP tests compare Avoca students' achievement levels with student averages or norms from around the nation. Since MAP tests are administered twice each year (fall and spring), they also enable the District to analyze achievement and growth within the year. With MAP, "actual" growth achieved by Avoca students is compared with "expected" growth levels as determined by norms established in similar schools. When expected growth levels are exceeded, it indicates superior achievement. In the reading and math tests administered in grades 3-8, Avoca students exceeded expected growth levels on 10 of 12 tests. As shown in the following chart, student achievement levels in Avoca are very high. Both the growth scores and the average years above grade level are reflective of the elite schools around the country.

MAP 2010

TEST	EXPECTED YEARLY GROWTH LEVEL	YEARS ABOVE GRADE LEVEL
3 rd Reading	Exceeds	1.5
3 rd Math	Exceeds	1.5
4 th Reading	Exceeds	2.0
4 th Math	Exceeds	1.5
5 th Reading	Exceeds	3.0
5 th Math	Exceeds	3.0
6 th Reading	Exceeds	3.0
6 th Math	Exceeds	3.0
7 th Reading	Exceeds	3.5
7 th Math	Exceeds	3.5
8 th Reading	Exceeds	3.5
8 th Math	Exceeds	3.0

GROWTH TOWARD EXCELLENCE

During the 2009-2010 school year, Avoca worked with nationally renowned statistician/consultant Clay Graham to better assess Avoca's achievement gains. Dr. Graham conducts deep analysis of ISAT test score results, focusing on the actual achievement levels attained by the students, not simply the percentages of "meets or exceeds" as the state reports. Using actual achievement scale scores, Dr. Graham is then able to rank the achievement levels of each district in the state. This analysis reveals that explosive achievement growth has occurred in Avoca, as the District's state ranking rose from 20th to 4th in five years.

YEAR	STATE RANKING
2005	20 th
2006	14 th
2007	8 th
2008	6 th
2009	4th

Avoca's achievement rankings among Illinois school districts as measured by ISAT scale scores



Awards & Recognition

Avoca is a dynamic learning community focused on reaching and sustaining excellence in all areas. Excellence was achieved this year on many fronts, including academics, athletics, technology, and community connections. The 2009-2010 school year exemplified what is possible when the entire school community strives toward realizing the same vision: "The mission of Avoca School District 37 is to maximize the unique potential of each child we serve."

ACADEMICS

- > Avoca ranked 4th in the state and 1st in the township on overall student achievement as measured by the 2009 ISAT scores.
- > Both Avoca West and Marie Murphy schools earned the Academic Excellence Award from the State of Illinois, which presents this recognition to schools that have more than 90% of students meet or exceed state standards for three consecutive years.
- > The Marie Murphy School Science Olympiad team took first place in the state and fifth in the nation.
- > Three Avoca West students won individual awards in a national competition for producing video book reviews, while another Avoca West student won a national award for a traditional book report.

TECHNOLOGY

- > Marie Murphy School was awarded the Apple Distinguished School Award. Only 54 schools in the nation earned this distinction.
- > Avoca West Elementary School was one of only 38 elementary schools in the nation to receive the Apple Exemplary Program Award.
- > Marie Murphy School Technology Coordinator Christopher Brown was named the 2010 Outstanding Technology Using Educator of the Year by Illinois Computing Educators (ICE).
- > In April, Avoca was one of three school districts in North America to host a technology site visit sponsored by the National School Boards Association (NSBA). More than 100 educators visited Avoca's exemplary programs in both schools during the two-day program.





ATHLETICS

Five athletic teams from Marie Murphy School won first place in the North Shore Independent Conference in their respective sport seasons.

- > Co-ed junior varsity soccer team, with a season record of 8 wins, 0 losses and 1 tie
- > Girls' junior varsity volleyball team, with a season record of 11 wins and 2 losses
- > Girls' junior varsity basketball team, with a season record of 15 wins and 0 losses
- > Boys' varsity basketball team, with a season record of 20 wins and 3 losses
- > Boys' varsity volleyball team, with a season record of 10 wins and 3 losses

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

The District Community Outreach Committee worked all year, and their efforts culminated in a comprehensive report and specific recommendations. In the next two to three years, enhancements will be made in the following areas: communications, volunteerism in the schools, students' community service, financial education and school-business partnerships.

- > The District Diversity Committee also spent the year researching ways to leverage Avoca's rich diversity, recommending curricular enhancements, increased participation from all community members, and various diversity outreach efforts.
- > The free technology classes offered to all Avoca adult residents were very well-received and set all-time enrollment records this year.



Financial Corner

Daily reports in the media have kept us all aware of the debt and budget crisis in Illinois and the continuing threats to cut state funding to schools. Like other school districts, Avoca District 37 is expecting to receive less funding from the state this school year than in years past.

Despite the state's financial condition and the worldwide economic downturn, Avoca's finances are in sound order thanks to the recently passed referendum and the continued recognition by the Avoca School Board of its responsibilities to the Avoca community to maintain strong fiscal controls over the District's yearly budget. Because of the drop in state funding, the Board and administration have redoubled their efforts to maintain a tightly controlled budget for the 2010-2011 school year with an eye toward future budgets.

In managing its fiscal responsibilities, however, the Board of Education, along with the administration, remains cognizant of the

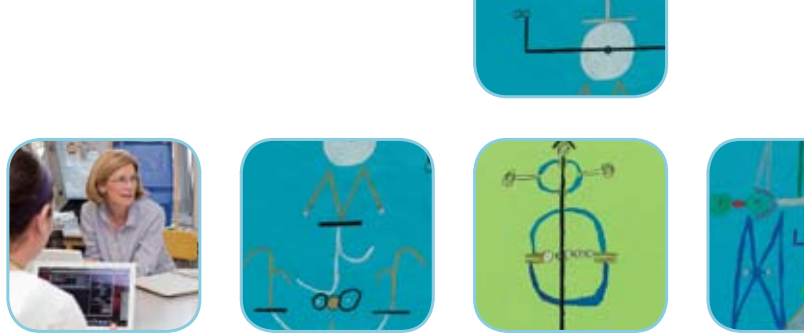
importance of maintaining small class sizes, programs in the arts, physical education options and extracurricular activities, as well as providing remedial opportunities and enrichment support. This approach to a well-rounded education is in keeping with Avoca's longstanding tradition of offering exceptional opportunities to students with the goal of increasing each student's potential to excel after leaving Avoca 37 to become part of the greater New Trier community. The commitment to this goal will remain at the forefront as we proceed into the future.



TEACHERS' CONTRACT

The current Teachers' Collective Bargaining Agreement is scheduled to expire prior to the start of the 2010-2011 school year. The Board and the administration spent many months negotiating a new contract with the teachers so the school year could begin without ongoing labor discussions. We are pleased to have concluded the negotiations on a new five-year contract. While the previous contracts covered four years, the lengthened five-year contract term will allow for better budget control and planning. Moreover, the Board believes that the new contract will ensure the ongoing and uninterrupted excellent quality of education continually delivered by the teachers, staff and administration at Avoca 37. Paramount to the Board in negotiating the contract was its financial responsibility to the community, while at all times remaining cognizant of the need to maintain exceptional educational standards. We believe the contract fulfills both goals now and into the future.



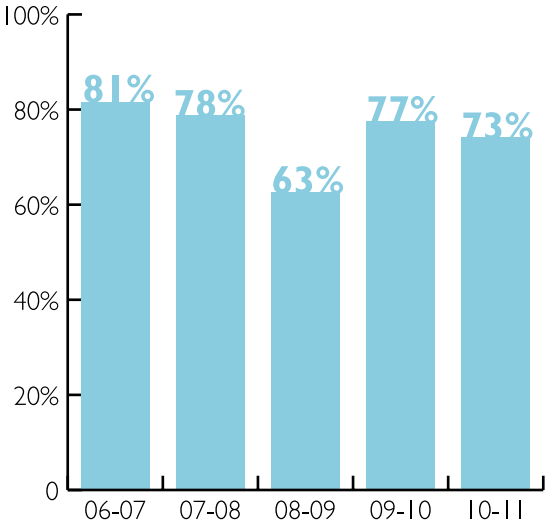


LONG-TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

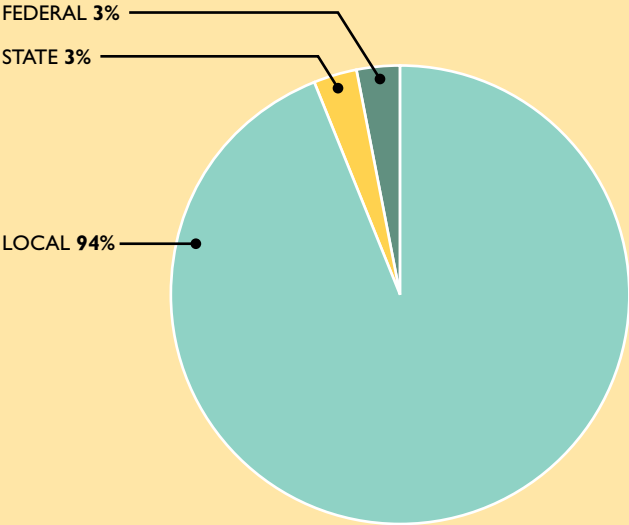
As laid out in last year's annual report, many of Avoca's properties are in need of repair. During the past year the Board of Education Finance Committee consulted with outside engineering firms to ascertain the scope of necessary immediate repairs and to develop a long-term plan to maintain the District's physical plant. These reports are still under review as the Board continues to work on a long-term plan that proactively seeks to avoid having to make emergency expenditures, which tend to be more costly than those that are anticipated and subject to a competitive bid process.

In finalizing plans for the future of the buildings, the Board of Education, in conjunction with the administration and the District's business office, will be examining all funding mechanisms and alternatives in an effort to provide the taxpayers with the most cost-effective implementation of the resulting long-term plan. These steps are undertaken with the intent of having the smallest impact on the District's fiscal plan for next year and the years to come while maintaining an environment that promotes the highest levels of learning and teaching for Avoca's students and faculty.

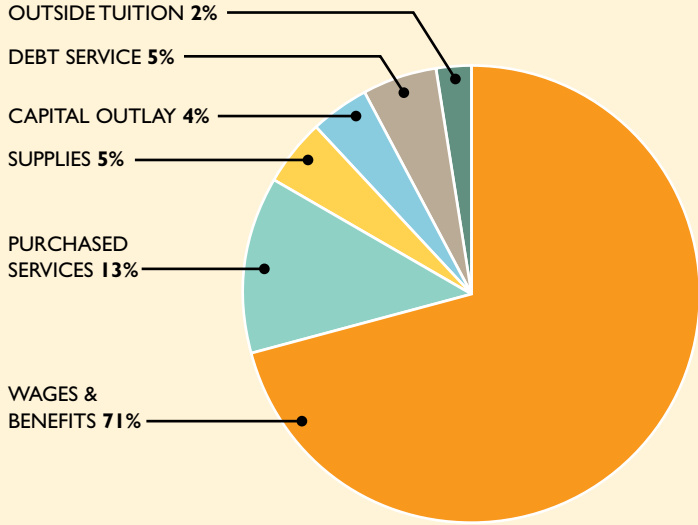
DISTRICT RESERVE LEVELS



2010 REVENUES | Total = \$12,087,209 Excluding \$12,091 Transfers



2010 EXPENDITURES | Total = \$13,276,444 Excluding \$12,091 Transfers and \$16,667 Dues



2007–2010 Strategic Plan Update

In the spring of 2007, Avoca adopted a new strategic plan that drew heavily from the work of Jim Collins and his widely respected book, *Good to Great*. What makes the Avoca strategic plan truly unique and visionary is that, in addition to articulating a mission statement and developing yearly goals, the Avoca

plan defines seven “greatness indicators” for the Avoca District and accompanies each indicator with at least one means of empirical measurement. The indicators are: student academic achievement; recognition of students, staff, school and district; high levels of satisfaction; leadership in innovation; student connectedness; success in high school and beyond; and fiscal responsibility.

In June 2010, Dr. Porto issued the second annual Greatness Indicator Report. For the first

time, Dr. Porto was able to present two years of data, enabling the District to track both outcomes and growth. The summary chart below clearly indicates that Avoca is making remarkable progress on its journey toward greatness. The complete report is available for review at the Avoca website, www.avoca37.org. From the home page, simply click on “From the Superintendent,” and to the right you will see a document entitled “2010 Greatness Indicator Report.”

GREATNESS INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT TOOL	2010 RESULTS & HIGHLIGHTS
Student Academic Achievement	ISAT; MAP; Consultant Report	Avoca ranks 4th in the State of Illinois and 1st in New Trier Township on ISAT. The “average” Avoca student scores 2.6 years above grade level in reading and math. 98% of all Avoca students meet or exceed expectations on ISAT.
Recognition of Students, Staff, School, District	District Recognition Portfolio	The Marie Murphy Science Olympiad Team finished 1st in the state and 5th in the nation. Both Avoca West and Marie Murphy schools earned the Academic Excellence Award from the State of Illinois. Marie Murphy was awarded the Apple Distinguished School designation, and Avoca West was presented the Apple Exemplary Program Award. Five Marie Murphy athletic teams won 1st place in the North Shore Independent Conference games.
High Levels of Satisfaction	BWP and Associates Survey of Parents and Staff	Teachers and parents report overwhelmingly positive perceptions on the current state of the District. Other than concern over future financial conditions, teachers and parents report no significant issues or concerns about the District.
Leadership in Innovation	Distinctive Impact Inventory	Avoca was contacted by districts in the area and across the country on 31 separate occasions to ask for information or assistance regarding innovative Avoca programs and practices. Avoca programs and practices most requested by other districts included technology, math and science and leadership initiatives.
Student Connectedness	Student Connectedness Database; Student Attendance and Discipline Report	85% of all middle school students participated in at least one extracurricular activity in 2009-2010. 74% of all elementary school students participated in at least one extracurricular activity in 2009-2010. Due to the H1N1 virus, student attendance was slightly down in 2009-2010. The number of discipline referrals to the principal declined 24% district-wide. In-school and out-of-school suspensions dropped by 90%.
Success in High School and Beyond	New Trier Freshmen Survey; New Trier 1st Quarter Grade Report Association	Former Avoca students rated their “preparedness for high school” at 3.93 out of a possible 4.00, significantly higher than the New Trier Township average. Former Avoca students specifically rated their preparedness for math, science and foreign language very high. There is room for growth in literature and writing. Significant numbers of former Avoca students participated in extracurricular activities at New Trier. Most former Avoca students do very well academically in their freshman coursework, earning an A or B in 69.04% of their core classes compared with the New Trier Township average of 67.20%.
Fiscal Responsibility	Five-Year Contract with Avoca Teachers	A new five-year contract was signed with the Avoca Education Association. The settlement falls within the financial parameters needed to avoid the necessity of a referendum in the near future.

Diversity Initiative



One of Avoca's greatest strengths is its diversity. The District's racial, ethnic, socio-economic and cultural diversity adds to the richness and depth of the educational experience for children. Wanting to ensure that we maximize the benefits, in 2009-2010 the Avoca Board of Education created the District Diversity Committee and assigned it the following task:

Research and initiate activities that celebrate, enhance and expand the benefits of diversity at Avoca and promote an understanding and appreciation of a world community, including, but not limited to:

- > Curriculum and instruction
- > Recruitment and hiring practices
- > Community outreach

After a year of research, the District Diversity Committee presented 11 specific recommendations to implement over the next several years. The School Board accepted the committee's recommendations and is currently working on a three-year implementation timeline.

RECOMMENDED DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

- 1 Create Diversity Centers within the libraries (ITC) at both Avoca West and Marie Murphy, and supplement this physical presence with an online component on the District's website.
- 2 Formalize a recurring communication schedule regarding diversity.
- 3 Pursue a commitment to staff awareness and training of cultural diversity through the Professional Development Committee.
- 4 Explore opportunities for sister school relationships at local, regional, national and global levels.
- 5 Incorporate the use of Global Education Checklist for students and staff through professional development and social-emotional learning activities.
- 6 Review current strategies on recruitment; broaden our scope to include sources that represent diverse populations.
- 7 Explore how cultures, geography and current events can be expanded upon in all subject areas and in fine arts.
- 8 Utilize Cross Cultural Interpretation Services, staff, parents and student relatives for non-English speaking parents during conferences and other school-related activities.
- 9 Provide multiple-language access to key school communications.
- 10 Encourage coaches of clubs/sports to facilitate involvement of our culturally diverse students.
- 11 Form a foreign language review committee to explore diversification of languages.

If you would like to participate in the implementation of these important diversity initiatives, please contact parent volunteer Ennie Oh at 847-251-2571 or Director of Pupil Services Cindy Devin at 847-251-3138.





AVOCA BOARD OF EDUCATION
2921 Illinois Road
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MAXIMIZING THE UNIQUE POTENTIAL OF EACH STUDENT

