

# Big Hollow Chalkboard

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER  
OF BIG HOLLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT 38



Reading specialist Jacqui Kolar explores "The Black Book of Colors" with her students during "Let's Read to Grow." For more, see page 3.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES



○ | "In America, no child should be left behind. Every child should be educated to his or her own full potential." *President George W. Bush*

○ | "Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts." *Albert Einstein*

○ | "Making students accountable for test scores works well on a bumper sticker and it allows many politicians to look good by saying that they will not tolerate failure. But it represents a hollow promise. Far from improving education, high-stakes testing marks a major retreat from fairness, from accuracy, from quality and from equity." *Former Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone*

**BIG HOLLOW**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 38

33335 N. Fish Lake Road  
Ingleside, IL 60041  
(847) 740-5320

## TESTING, TESTING...

**'Tis the season for Big Hollow students and their peers across Illinois to sharpen their no. 2 pencils and report to school well-rested and nourished.**

March is ISAT time for 3rd- through 8th-graders.

The ISAT, or Illinois Standards Achievement Test, is one of several formal assessments Big Hollow students undergo each year. They also participate in MAP testing in fall and spring, and take standardized achievement tests each May. Each test serves a purpose, but the tests vary in how meaningful their results are to students and educators, notes Big Hollow Superintendent Ron Pazanin.

Let's take a look at each assessment, the rationale for it and how well it measures a child's progress.

### ISAT

The ISAT is the test Illinois uses for compliance with federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Simply put, NCLB mandates that all children perform at grade level as determined by their age

and placement by the year 2014. That's right – ALL children, 100%, including those with special needs. And test scores are the sole criterion for gauging performance. A school must make adequate yearly progress (AYP), which means the percentage of students performing at grade level must increase by a specific percentage each year. If this sounds implausible, that's because it is in the majority opinion of the educational community.

The NCLB mandate means every child takes the ISAT. This includes special-needs children, whose scores count toward a given school's AYP. "But ISAT scores give us no barometer to measure these girls' and boys' individual progress," Pazanin comments.

"A special-needs child may be making significant individual progress but still test below grade level!"

NCLB is coming up for renewal; Pazanin predicts its basic principles will remain intact with significant, practical modifications. In the meantime, parental worries that teachers are only "teaching to the test" are largely unfounded, says Pazanin.

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## SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

During February, Big Hollow students, along with thousands of other Illinois girls and boys, participated in history lessons focused on America's presidents. February 19th was Presidents' Day and February 12th was Lincoln's Birthday, which this year included special commemorations celebrating the 16th president's 200th birthday.



It is interesting to speculate how Lincoln would react if he had the opportunity to compare the Big Hollow School District that existed during his presidency (Big Hollow had been operating for 25 years when Lincoln was first elected) with the District as it exists in 2009. Today, he would see 1,560 students in three modern school buildings versus fewer than 100 pupils in a one-room log structure; girls and boys transported by school busses or cars instead of by horses and horse-drawn wagons; and an enrollment comprising a diverse spectrum of students.

Lincoln would, however, discover two constants during Big Hollow's 173 years of existence. One, the School District's residents still expect and support a first-rate educational program for all students. Two, the District's teachers and staff demonstrate the utmost professionalism and commitment in the daily delivery of high-quality academic opportunities.

I believe Big Hollow would earn President Lincoln's enthusiastic approval.

*Ron Pazanin is the Superintendent of Big Hollow School District 38.*

*To contact Mr. Pazanin, e-mail [ronaldpazanin@bighollow.us](mailto:ronaldpazanin@bighollow.us).*

## TESTING (from Page 1)

"A number of questions on the ISAT change every year, so this wouldn't be effective anyway," Pazanin explains. "What you may see in some cases are shifting time allotments as certain subjects get more attention at the expense of others. At Big Hollow, though, we subscribe to more holistic instruction so that all subjects get a balanced treatment over the course of a given week – regardless of what the test emphasizes."

### MAP

Consistent with the goals of Response to Intervention (RTI), an instructional process now undergoing implementation at all Illinois public schools, MAP testing provides an ongoing assessment of students.

MAP covers reading/language arts and math. For the 2008-09 school year, Big Hollow students in grades 2-8 are MAP testing during 55-minute sessions each fall and spring. Looking ahead to the 2009-10 school year, the District is planning to use a similar test, AIMSweb, for grades K-1. And the District may opt for shorter (20-minute) thrice yearly tests, to keep closer tabs on student progress.

"The two major components we evaluate with any test, its validity and reliability, are acceptable in both the 55- and 20-minute versions of MAP," Pazanin explains. "Obviously, a 55-minute test will have more questions but there is the issue of whether students lose focus during longer tests."

### STS

Big Hollow students in grades 1-8 take STS Standardized Achievement Tests each May. The STS includes sections on reading, language art, math, science and social studies.

"We want a valid, reliable charting of each individual student's progress," says Pazanin. "These tests allow for a snapshot of every student from one year to the next, including special-needs kids where we can identify progress on their terms. Plus, Big Hollow has a long-lasting history with the testing system we use, so we can look at a particular grade level and identify trends in terms of where we are making gains or need to focus more attention."

The benchmark to use in looking at both individual and group achievement test scores is grade level plus 0.8 (as May is the 8th month of the school year). A 4th-grader achieving at grade level would log in at 4.8.

"We'd love to streamline our testing and see ISAT be a standardized achievement test, but without a continuum in certain subjects like social studies and science, it doesn't measure up right now," Pazanin explains.

## SUPER SPELLERS: Could you spell "goatee?" How about "herbivore?"

And, could you get up on stage in front of an audience of several hundred peers and spell these words correctly? Sixteen Big Hollow students in grades 4-5 tackled words like prescription, dejected and chinchilla while 23 6th- through 8th-graders took on daffodil, rouge and shogun, in this year's Elementary and Middle School spelling bees.

Seventh-grader Leann Kang won the Middle School Bee on January 27 by correctly spelling two consecutive words, "femininity" and "fuselage." Fourth-grader Emma Burdett took top honors in the Elementary School Bee on February 2. Spelling bee winners went on to regional competitions respective to their grade level. For a complete list of Spelling Bee contestants, visit [www.bighollow.us](http://www.bighollow.us).



Seventh-grader **Leann Kang**



Fourth-grader **Emma Burdett**

# ADOPT-AN-ISLAND THIS SPRING

Given the extreme snow and cold we've all experienced this winter, adopting an island probably sounds pretty enticing right now. Hawaii, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Tahiti, St. Thomas...many of us are nurturing an island fantasy. Happily, Big Hollow's new "Adopt-An-Island" program requires no airfare or luggage – the "islands" up for adoption are areas of the Fish Lake Road campus in need of beautification.

Approved for launch by the School Board last fall, "Adopt-An-Island" allows Big Hollow organizations, clubs, classrooms, staff and families; community organizations; and community members and families to assist in the maintenance of the landscaped areas of the Fish Lake campus by performing weed removal, cultivating approved plantings, and pruning bushes. Many of the areas eligible for "adoption" are parking lot islands, hence the program's name. A landscape service would charge the District up to \$45,000 per year to perform these services. School Board President Vickie Gallichio conceived "Adopt-An-Island" as a win-win opportunity.

"We hope this program will encourage community participation within the District, while allowing the District to put more dollars in the classroom," noted Gallichio.

With spring just a few weeks away, it's almost time to dig out those gardening gloves and hand shovels. Please visit or call the District office to request an application and receive detailed program guidelines.

## PTO Notes

Buy your **Spring Zing** tickets now! This year's gala, featuring dinner, dancing, and live/silent auctions, takes place Saturday, March 21 at Maravela's. Proceeds go to technology enhancements for our libraries.

The **Fall Book Fair** generated record sales of \$16,000, giving the PTO \$8,000 with which to purchase books from Scholastic for all three Big Hollow libraries

The generous Big Hollow community donated about 200 pairs of pajamas and more than 100 books during the holiday-season **Pajama Drive**. Pajamas and books go to needy children living in shelters or group homes.

### Upcoming Events

**Spring Clothing Resale** – Friday & Saturday, April 17-18, Primary School gym. Sellers keep 70%, PTO receives 30%.

**Rally to Rescue Pet Expo** – Saturday, April 18, Elementary School gym. Local pet-related businesses (vets, kennels, groomers, etc.) are invited to participate. Two rescue groups will attend to share information about fostering/adopting pets.

For more information on the above, contact the District office.

## IN THE NEWS: Update

**School Board Elections:** When Big Hollow voters go to the polls on April 7, 2009, they will choose from seven community members to fill four open School Board positions. In the order their names will appear on the ballot, those running for the School Board are: Joe Bridge, Julia Mazur, James C. Jochheim, Heather Janquart, James DeVito, Margaret A. Mallahan and Victoria A. Gallichio.

**Transportation:** The District renewed its bus-service contract with Jones/Durham for the 2009-10 school year at no cost increase.

**Curriculum Upgrades:** The District will be purchasing a new reading curriculum for K-5 and perhaps one that covers K-8 if a suitable program exists. A team of faculty and administrators are presently evaluating several viable options.

### Kindergarten Registration March 18-19

Registration for incoming kindergarteners will be held from 6-7:30 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday, March 18-19, at the Primary School. To be eligible, the child must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2009. Three (3) proofs of residency are required. Parent or guardian must present the child's ORIGINAL COUNTY-RECORDED BIRTH CERTIFICATE. Registration packets are now available in the School District office during regular school hours.

# CURRICULUM CORNER

## Let's Read to Grow

Inside Jacqui Kolar's classroom in the Primary School building are hundreds of books, artfully displayed, lining shelves and walls. The room features several appealing seating areas in which to cozy up with a book.

Kolar, in her fourth year at Big Hollow, is a reading specialist providing extra support for 1st-graders. She is also the creative force behind "Let's Read to Grow," an innovative program that brings books to life while offering participants a multisensory experience of another culture.

The format of "Let's Read to Grow" is simple. One evening a month, Kolar's students, their siblings and parents gather in the kindergarten pod adjacent to Kolar's classroom and read an international children's book. "We look at the cover, talk about the book's and author's origins, and look at a globe to see where the story takes place," Kolar explains. "We talk about any foreign words in the text, the telling details in the illustrations, the cultural differences and similarities. The international angle is my choice. I feel it's important to bridge the culture gap."

Each session continues with a writing exercise, a craft and a third activity that varies. "It's very hands-on and interactive since the parents are right there working with their children," notes Kolar.

Kolar unveiled "Let's Read to Grow" in May 2007. After its first full year in 2007-08, Kolar secured a grant from a charitable foundation that helps defray expenses. She invites all of her current students to each month's session, with about 11-14 families attending each event.

One "regular" is 2nd-grader Ryan Scimeca. (This year, Kolar continues to invite those "graduates" of her program who had perfect attendance last year.) Of "Let's Read to Grow," Ryan's mother Kris says, "We absolutely love the program. It's helped Ryan become a stronger, more confident reader and offered him different ideas to explore." Says Ryan, "It's awesome. I'm going to go every month until maybe I'm in high school!"



Ryan Scimeca (R), brother Jonathan and dad Rick enjoy a "Let's Read to Grow" activity.

For more information  
[WWW.BIGHOLLOW.US](http://WWW.BIGHOLLOW.US)

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*The Chalkboard is a publication of Big Hollow School District 38. It is edited by Cathy Ralston and designed and printed by Steven Lanham.*

# BIG HOLLOW MISSION STATEMENT

Big Hollow School District will foster excellence in education so that its students will reach their full potential in an ever-changing society.

## SCHOOLS

### Superintendent

Mr. Ron Pazanin

#### PRIMARY SCHOOL

Christine Arndt, Principal  
33335 N. Fish Lake Road  
Ingleside, IL 60041  
Phone (847) 740 - 5320  
Fax (847) 740 - 5332

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Dawn Smith, Asst. Principal  
33315 N. Fish Lake Road  
Ingleside, IL 60041  
Phone (847) 740 - 1490  
Fax (847) 740 - 3795

#### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Margaret Webb, Principal  
Deb Coolidge, Asst. Principal  
26051 W. Nippersink Road  
Ingleside, IL 60041  
Phone (847) 740 - 1490  
Fax (847) 740 - 9021

## IMPORTANT DATES

The Big Hollow School Board typically meets the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Upcoming meeting dates are March 16, April 20 and May 18.

**ISAT Testing, Grades 3-8**  
March 3-13

**Kindergarten Registration**  
March 18-19

**End of 3rd Quarter**  
March 20

**Spring Break**  
March 28-April 5

**Election Day**  
April 7

**8th-Grade Graduation**  
June 4

**Last Day of School**  
June 10

*(pending no additional snow days)*

## SCHOOL BOARD

### President

Mrs. Vickie Gallichio

### Vice President

Mrs. Jan Carsella

### Secretary

Mr. Doug Pedersen

### Members

Mr. James DeVito  
Mr. Kenneth Frank  
Ms. Vivian Kueter

boardofeducation@bighollow.us

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**BIG HOLLOW**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 38  
33335 N. Fish Lake Road  
Ingleside, IL 60041  
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