

# WILLOW SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOL

DISTRICT 108 • COOK COUNTY

SUPERINTENDENT • FRANK C. PATRICK  
PRINCIPAL • LORI SMUDA

8345 ARCHER AVENUE  
WILLOW SPRINGS, ILLINOIS 60480-1499  
PHONE (708) 839-6828 • FAX (708) 839-8399  
[www.willowsschool.org](http://www.willowsschool.org)

December 10, 2018

Dear Willow Springs School Community Member:

There's been a lot of talk in recent months about Willow Springs School District 108 consolidating with a neighboring school district. In fact, you may have been approached to sign a petition to get a consolidation question as an advisory question on the April election ballot with the hope of lowering property taxes. This effort has not originated from the School Board nor is it endorsed by the School Board. The Board does not believe that in the end, when all the details are worked out, that there will be any significant savings to the homeowners of the District. To further study consolidation requires a willing partner – our neighboring districts are not interested in consolidation.

As residents in the Willow Springs School community, the Board members are very aware of the property taxes that we all pay. In fact, across all Illinois, South Cook County pays the highest property taxes in the State. As Board members, we work to be good stewards of the tax dollars we collect to efficiently and effectively provide a solid educational program to our students – a program that the Illinois State Board of Education ranked as Commendable. As such, the District maintains class sizes that are at the statewide average grades 3-8. We have purposefully kept class sizes small for grades K-2 as the research indicates that class sizes of 15 create the optimal learning conditions for students this age – our 3<sup>rd</sup> grade test scores indicate this strategy is successful.

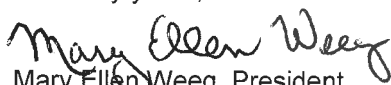
The Board has joined other South Cook County organizations that push for change to school funding in Illinois – one of the most inequitable systems in the country. In the past 2 years, we've been successful in getting a new General State Aid formula, The Evidence Based Funding Formula, passed by the Illinois General Assembly that will hopefully reduce our District's reliance on property taxes. It looks promising, but the State is an unreliable partner in funding and we need to be vigilant in making sure that the State meets its financial obligations to school districts. Your support in contacting our legislators to insure that they continue to fully fund education in Illinois would be very useful and appreciated.

Through our participation in South Cook organizations, we've also been successful in passing a state Property Tax Rebate grant where school districts awarded the grant will be able to rebate some school property tax to the taxpayers. This is the first year that the grant is available – it was created with South Cook County in mind. At our next Board meeting, the Board will vote to officially apply for the grant. I expect that vote will pass unanimously. However, there is no guarantee that we will be awarded the grant this year. The State funded the entire program at \$50 million – a good start but much more is needed. Your support in contacting our legislators to insure that the program continues and to request additional funding for this program would be essential to getting that done.

Also, your support in contacting our state legislators to request more equitable taxing of mobile home parks would be helpful and essential. Getting the current unfair tax code revised to more fairly tax mobile home parks would be a great financial relief to the District.

As always, school board meetings are open to the public. The Board invites you to attend and to also work with us to affect legislative change in Springfield that will positively impact the finances of the District. We believe these efforts will be the most effective ways to reduce our property taxes.

Sincerely yours,



Mary Ellen Weeg, President  
Willow Springs SD 108 Board of Education



WILLOW SPRINGS SCHOOL, WHERE A LOVE OF LEARNING GROWS.