

Community High School District 128: Our History

From about 1835 to the Civil War, most of the land east of the Des Plaines River was heavily forested and passed up by the early settlers because too much effort was needed to clear the land. Most of those who settled in the area were New Englanders who heard reports of the fertility of the soil from soldiers returning east after the Blackhawk War of 1832.

Libertyville's early settlers placed education high on the list of their priorities. As one of the first community efforts, a log cabin school was constructed as a select school for young ladies and was operated from 1843 through 1848 as the earliest formalized elementary school in the area.

Thomas Madden donated property on Madden Road for the building of another one-room school around 1850. This school was the original Oak Grove School. Sometime between 1861 and 1883, the Rondout School was built as well.

The Early Years

In the late 1800's, the school year consisted of two four-month terms. The summer term, usually taught by a woman, was attended by younger children who were needed less on the farm. Winter term, usually taught by a man, began after the harvest in November and ended in March in time for spring farm work. In 1889, teachers' contracts disallowed school on Saturday and provided for a six-week vacation during the summer. Several years later, winter term was lengthened to six months beginning in September.

The Rondout School's current structure on Bradley was built in 1917 and improved several times since then.

Oak Grove residents approved a new school on a nearby site to the original Madden School of the 1850's in 1923. The present Oak Grove School was constructed in 1957 with the junior high addition in 1970.

Prior to 1926, the Hawthorn District was composed of three separate districts: the original one-room Hawthorn school building constructed to educate the children of the dairy farm workers, the Butterfield School, and the Coon School. In 1926 when the three schools consolidated, the first new building was constructed; the original was improved over the years to its now present state as the Hawthorn Intermediate School. A district that once served 60 students now serves more than 2900 students.

Central School was erected in 1871. In September of 1898, a high school department was added to the offerings of the Libertyville Public Schools and was housed in one room of the old Central Elementary School. Rockland School was added in 1926 and enlarged substantially in 1929 to accommodate for a growing community.

The first junior high, Highland School, was built adjacent to the Rockland School in 1947. Numerous other buildings were added to Libertyville's elementary district 70 and improved upon to provide the five present schools. One of these, the Butterfield School built in 1969, was constructed to provide Libertyville students with an alternative, flexible educational environment. Today, however, this school has incorporated a more traditional philosophy for instruction to be consistent with the other area elementary schools.

District 128 Established

In **1905**, the three-year high school course was expanded to a four-year program. In 1916, the Libertyville Township High School District was established and a Board of Education elected. Only one year later, the first high school building was erected, boasting eight classrooms, seven faculty members and 106 students who heralded from not only the township but also from Fremont, Grayslake, Fox Lake, Lake Zurich and Gurnee.

The new township high school offered a broader curriculum, including commercial courses, manual training and extra-curricular activities in the fields of athletics and music.

A referendum established the Libertyville Fremont Consolidated High School District 120 in 1949, only to add three sections of Vernon Township one year later. The Butler Lake Building was opened in 1953, and Mundelein High School was added in 1961.

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An addition to the Butler Lake Building was completed in 1971 and provided an auditorium, swimming pool, field house, an enlarged library and 20 classrooms.

Growth and Change for District 128

On January 29, 1977, at a time when many school building referenda were failing or just barely passing, District 128 passed a \$3,425,000 new school addition referendum by 491 votes. The addition to the Butler Lake Building was completed in 1979 and included 15 classrooms, nine laboratories and two physical education stations. Also included were an enlarged library-learning center and a 195-seat studio theater.

Upon Walter Johnson's retirement in 1980, Dr. Donald Gossett was named superintendent. Gossett joined the District in 1965. He served as superintendent until his retirement from the District in 1998. The Board of Education named Dr. David Clough of Chaska, Minnesota, superintendent in July 1998.

Dr. Joseph Wojtena was named principal of Libertyville High School in July, 1996 and continued in that position until his retirement in June, 2005. Brad Swanson succeeded Dr. Wojtena as principal and served in that position until 2008. Dr. Marina Scott became the new LHS principal in July 2009, following a year-long co-principalship with interim principals Dr. James Whittington and Mike Stevens. Upon Dr. Scott's retirement in 2017, the District hired Dr. Tom Kouletas as the new principal.

The District continued to grow throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and a referendum was finally passed in 1997 for the construction of a new high school campus in Vernon Hills. The new facility opened as the freshmen campus of Libertyville High School in September 1999. The campus officially became Vernon Hills High School in the 2000 - 2001 school year. Dr. James Whittington served as the first principal of the new school. With the opening of the Vernon Hills campus, the district discontinued the use of the Brainerd Building except for its athletic facilities. Dr. Whittington retired in 2003, and Dr. Ellen Cwick was named the next Vernon Hills High School principal. Upon Dr.

Cwick's retirement in 2014, VHHS Associate Principal Dr. Jon Guillaume became the high school's third principal.

In April 2007, the District Administration Center moved from its location on the Libertyville High School campus to office space in Vernon Hills.

Dr. Clough retired in June 2008. Associate Superintendent Prentiss Lea succeeded Dr. Clough as the District's fourth superintendent. Following Lea's retirement in 2021, Dr. Denise Herrmann was named the district's first female superintendent.