

THE VISION

Dr. Kevin Jauch, Superintendent
2921 Illinois Rd., Wilmette, IL 60091
847-251-3587 <http://avoca37.org>

October 2015
Volume 19

Annual Report/Back to School Edition

Smile you are on Camera! Avoca School District Upgrades Security Cameras



As part of the Avoca School District's Health and Life Safety Survey, we have upgraded the quality of the surveillance cameras that we have around both schools and added several to increase their coverage.

The 10 high quality cameras at Avoca West and the 8 at Marie Murphy School operate on a 24/7 basis. Designed with wide dynamic range lenses for clarity and coverage, these cameras come with infrared LEDs for increased night vision and the ability to zoom in. The cameras are always operating and accessible to district administrators in real-time from either work or home.

A sophisticated network video recorder saves video footage to a 9TB hard drive whenever the cameras detect motion. The vast majority of this video data will never be accessed; however, if an incident should occur on the grounds of either Avoca West or Marie Murphy Schools, be assured that it will be captured on video.

Student Enrollment at Avoca continues its positive trend.

August Enrollment K-8th Grade

2011	638
2012	656
2013	676
2014	701
2015	711

Avoca School District 37's Music Education Program Receives National Recognition

The NAMM Foundation* recognized Avoca School District 37 for its outstanding commitment to music education with a Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) designation. Avoca joins 388 districts across the country and 6 districts from Illinois in receiving this prestigious distinction in 2015.

Now in its 16th year, Best Communities for Music Education affirms school districts that have demonstrated exceptional efforts toward maintaining music education as part of schools' core curriculum. Avoca's music program consists of a Strings program with 7 levels of participation, 3 levels of Band, 3 levels of Choir, and General Music including music technology and a keyboard lab program.

"At Avoca music education is not an add-on. It is an integral, highly-valued aspect of our educational program. Our mission to *maximize the unique potential of each child we serve* necessitates a vibrant and rigorous fine arts program of which music is an instrumental component," shared Superintendent Kevin Jauch. "Everyday we have the unique pleasure of seeing the impact of our music programs, but to be recognized by NAMM on the national stage reinforces the fact that our efforts are truly exceptional."

* About The NAMM Foundation

The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its nearly 9,200 members around the world. The Foundation advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs. For more information about The NAMM Foundation, please visit www.nammfoundation.org.



From the Superintendent

Welcome back to a new Avoca school year! Like those before, this one holds much promise and potential!

You are receiving this newsletter, because Avoca is *your* school district. Whether you currently have children at one of our schools, are an empty-nester, have children coming our way shortly or have some Avoca alumni in your household, we want you to take great pride in your impressive little school district.

In this Annual Review/Back to School edition of the Vision you will read about our continued academic, fine arts and financial successes from the previous school year, as well as get a glimpse of our continuous improvement mindset as we strive to maximize the unique potential of every child we serve!



Over the course of this school year we would like to invite you, our community members, into our schools to experience the many wonderful programs and activities we have to offer. Our fine arts program loves to share their accomplishments in music, visual arts and theater. Please know that all of our evening performances are open to community members. The level of artisanship demonstrated by our students belies their chronological age! And, of course, it is never too early to remind our veterans of Avoca's Annual Veterans Day Breakfast at Avoca West Elementary School.

Should you have any inquiries about the Avoca Community Preschool, Avoca West Elementary School or Marie Murphy School, please do not hesitate to reach out to us!

Innovative Technology at MM

As the Avoca School District begins the process of conducting a technology audit and the development of a technology strategic plan, the staff at Marie Murphy are authoring professional development goals in the area of technology as well. Seeking new ways to use technology to minimize environmental impacts, shift the focus towards student-created technology projects, demonstrate student progress and growth, and create digital learning environments, technology specialists Kelli Lane and Tim Furman are working with teachers to implement activities and systems to achieve these aims.

The impact of these technology initiatives are already being felt by Marie Murphy students. In 8th grade science, Mr. Gravagna continues to develop and expand a video streaming library of science lectures and demonstrations for home viewing that leads to more hands-on activities in class.

Many teachers have developed digital learning environments utilizing Google Classroom - a tool that allows for communication, document storage, homework submission and digital assessment all via a single portal. The new math curriculum being implemented by the Marie Murphy math team utilizes technological resources in a way that previous math curricula have not. E-textbooks, digital manipulatives, and assessment generators all have reduced material consumption as well as introduced formative data points to help drive instruction.

Using technology in new ways at the point of instruction not only allows our students to develop valuable skills that will prepare them for their next steps in education, but it also provides educators with multiple avenues to assist students in maximizing their unique potential.

AVOCA COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL

2921 Illinois Road
Wilmette, IL 60091
847-251-3138
avoca37.org/communitypreschool/

Mrs. Donna Toops

Director of Pupil Services
toopsd@avoca37.org

AVOCA WEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

235 Beech Drive
Glenview, IL 60025
847-724-6800
avoca37.org/avocawest/

Mrs. Jessica Hutchison

Principal
hutchisonj@avoca37.org

MARIE MURPHY SCHOOL

2921 Illinois Road
Wilmette, IL 60091
847-251-3617
avoca37.org/mariemurphy/

Mr. Matt Palcer

Principal
palcerm@avoca37.org

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Dr. Kevin Jauch

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Avoca Community Preschool



Coming Events:

Both typically developing students and students with special needs worked and played together in Avoca's blended preschool setting last year.

Avoca's highly trained staff conducted screenings, play-based evaluations and formal assessments to individually target instruction to support each child. Julie Barello, an English Learner (EL) endorsed Early Childhood Special Education teacher and Reading Specialist, together with Mandy Hale, a Speech and Language Pathologist, met the social/emotional and educational needs of our diverse group of learners. Our true co-taught classroom model provided an excellent educational environment for Avoca's youngest students.

Last year, the Avoca Community Preschool initiated family field trips. Families and teachers in the program enthusiastically attended a fall trip to Didier Farms and a spring experience to the River Trails Nature Center. These trips provided engaging, hands-on, educational activities

to support the growth of language, facilitate a cohesive parent group and model the types of community outings appropriate for our 3 to 5-year-old age group.

Daily classroom lessons were tied to the Illinois Early Learning Standards, and teachers monitored student progress using the Teaching Strategies' GOLD assessment tool and online portfolio system. Teachers used a centers-based instruction method targeting literacy and math skills, as well as social-emotional development and

motor skills. Teachers directly taught letters and sounds using resources from Jolly Phonics to assist our students with their pre-literacy skills. We also utilized Handwriting Without Tears to build students' hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills.

Weekly lessons in the Second Step social-emotional program were woven into the students' circle time and other age appropriate center time activities. Second Step assisted our students in learning appropriate behaviors, positive interactions with peers and regulation of emotions.

Columbus Day

Monday, October 12 | No School

AW Picture Retake Day

Tuesday, October 21

Parent Teacher Conferences ½ Day Student Attendance

Wednesday, October 21

Thursday, October 22

BOE Meeting

Thursday, October 22 | 6:30pm

Teacher Institute Day

Friday, October 23 | No School

MM Picture Retake Day

Tuesday, October 27

MM Halloween

Orchestra Concert

Thursday, October 29 | 7:00pm

AW Halloween Parade & Parties

Friday, October 30 | 1:40pm

MM Halloween Dance

Friday, October 30 | 7:00-9:00pm

COTW Meeting

Monday, November 2 | 5:30pm

PTC Meeting - AW

Wednesday, November 4 | 7:00pm

MM 8th Grade

Washington D.C. Trip

Wednesday, November 4 through

Friday, November 6

MM 8th Grade Orchestra Festival At New Trier

Thursday, November 5 | 7:30-8:30pm

AW Veterans Day Breakfast

Wednesday, November 11 | 8:30-9:30am

BOE Meeting

Thursday, November 19 | 6:30pm

Thanksgiving | No School

Wednesday, November 24 through

Friday, November 26



Avoca Fun Facts:

- Nine Avoca educators presented at professional conferences or to college classes during 2014-2015 school year!
- Five different pieces of student writing from three Marie Murphy authors won awards and were recognized at the local and national levels last year!

New Creative Writing Class

During the 2014-2015 school year, Marie Murphy strengthened their Allied Arts course offerings by adding a Creative Writing class to all 6th-8th grade students. The class was created for a plethora of reasons: to provide more direct writing instruction, to serve as a creative outlet, to help prepare students for the transition to high school and, most importantly, to foster a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment in writing for Marie Murphy students.

Utilizing Lucy Calkin's Units of Study approach to writing instruction, Ms. Tramontin has made the class a huge success. Students have an avenue to share their personal narratives in an environment that promotes risk-taking, respect and collaboration. Ms. Tramontin's extensive professional development in writing has not only benefitted the students, but also has paid dividends in Marie Murphy's English classes as well, as Ms. Bialk, Ms. Pagakis, and Ms. Cunningham all implement aspects of the Units of Study approach to their literature and informational text analysis assignments.

All students in the class created several published (final draft) pieces over the course of their semester of study. The creative process was highlighted by several students performing read-alouds of their personal narrative pieces at Portfolio Night last spring.

The creation of the Creative Writing class sets a foundation for a more comprehensive writing program that utilizes similar instructional practices consistently from grade level to grade level to develop both academic writing skills and personal narratives, as well.

Celebrating the *Masterful* Work of Avoca West's Master Schedule Committee

Avoca's master schedule, in place for nearly a decade, has been both an asset for Avoca West and a resource for other districts considering ways to improve. The original schedule allowed for teachers to have common plan time each day, both with their grade level teammates and with other staff members who serve the grades' students. As a result, countless Avoca West students have thrived in our professional learning community!

This past winter our staff looked closely at the master schedule to consider ways to more effectively meet the needs of students in the ever changing world of education. The Master Schedule Committee, made up of a variety of staff members from various grade levels

and disciplines, surveyed Avoca West students, staff, and families to look for opportunities to improve our program. The team carefully researched different course offerings and worked through possible ways to more effectively use the limited time students have with their classroom teachers. The following recommendations were presented to the Board of Education:

- Move the 2nd Step Social Emotional curriculum (formerly PATHS) into the general education classroom, so that teachers can effectively reinforce concepts throughout the week/year and across the curriculum.
- Add Creative Drama in the spot vacated by PATHS as a weekly, hour-long course for students in 1st-5th grade.
- Extend the lunch and recess period to allow adequate time for students to eat and transition to recess.
- Reorder specials classes to maximize morning learning time for all grade levels.
- Maintain collaborative time for teachers to focus on instructional planning and problem solving.

Many thanks to our Master Schedule Committee for the time and passion spent in making sure that Avoca West continues to be an exceptional place to learn, love, and grow.

Avoca District 37 Parent Teacher Council

The PTC had another rewarding and productive year. Thanks to the fundraising efforts of our volunteers and generous donors, the PTC was able to contribute \$16,000 toward upgrades to the sound system at Marie Murphy School.

Our events were successful, too. Pre-sale tickets to Movie Night sold so well that we had to move the event from Avoca West to the larger gym at Marie Murphy. Our first ever Intercultural Dinner and Talent Show highlighted the diverse community which we are lucky to be a part of here on the north shore.

New projects for this year include piloting our first online school directory, launching a new line of spirit-wear and bringing back our popular Parent's Night Out. Information on all of these events and our fundraising efforts can be found on our website at www.avocaptc.org. I encourage all who can donate and/or volunteer in ANY capacity to do so to help us support our unique school district. I look forward to another wonderful year!

Kathy Stein
PTC President



Avoca Secures Schools' Front Offices

The next time you visit the Avoca West or Marie Murphy school office you should notice a brighter, more open and welcoming space. For years both offices contained floor to ceiling partial walls separating the work stations of the two office assistants. Removal of those walls now allows more natural light to fill the space, and our lines of site have greatly improved. Both office assistants can now see visitors before allowing them access to the front office.

Visitors inside the school offices will not be able to enter the rest of the school until they have been vetted by the district's electronic visitor management system, Raptor. Visitors who require access to the rest of the school will be asked for their drivers license or another form of state or federal identification. This picture ID will be run through Raptor, and instantly screened against registered sex offender databases in all 50 states.

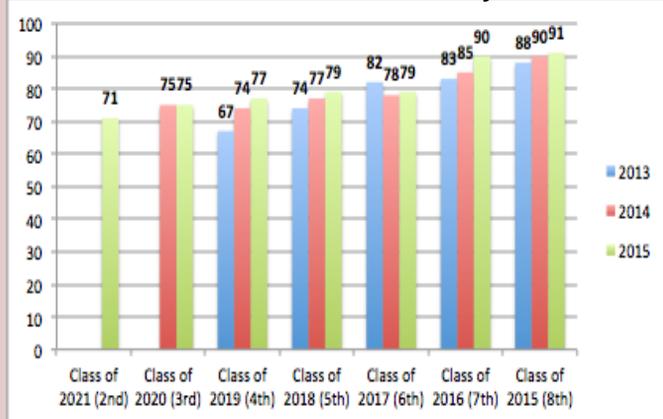
The system prints a name tag with the guest's photo to be placed in a bright green and blue visitor lanyard that needs to be worn at all times within the building. Office staff will electronically unlock the door to the main hallway allowing the guest access. Visitors whose identification triggers the system will initiate an established response from building officials and our local police departments.

A large window was also installed at Avoca West in the front of the school to improve visibility of the main entrance and front parking lot. The hallway door to the nurse's office was bricked off and the short passage there and the existing washroom were remodeled into an ADA compliant washroom.

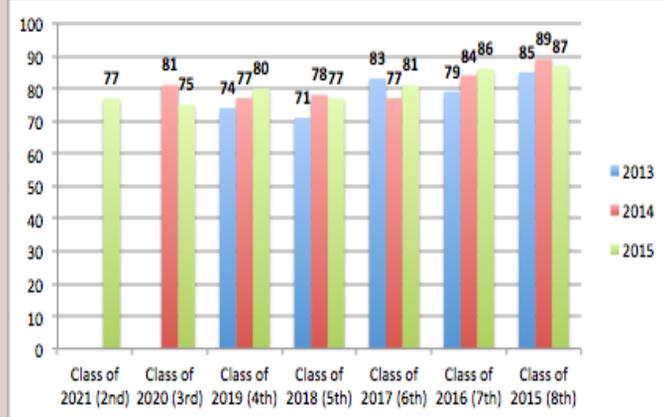
Our extra security is solely designed to improve school safety. Avoca West and Marie Murphy still want to welcome our parents, volunteers and visitors, and we are always appreciative of their efforts.



MAP Math National Percentiles by Cohort



MAP Reading National Percentiles by Cohort



Measures of Academic Progress

The main charge of the Avoca School District is to provide the community with a sound educational program for its children. In order to be sure that our students are academically ready for high school, college and/or careers, Avoca uses a variety of assessments. With Illinois still transitioning its mandated assessment program, PARCC data reflecting the academic achievement of the 2014-2015 student body is not available at this time.

Fortunately, for a decade Avoca has used NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests to hold ourselves accountable for our students' learning. Looking at trend data for the same group of students, or cohort, over many years shows that Avoca students start out strong and typically grow even stronger in each subsequent year in comparison to their peers across the country.

According to the 2015 Spring math MAP data, by 3rd grade the average Avoca student score is similar to the national average score of a typical 4th grader, and by 5th grade the Avoca average score is a little higher than the national average for 7th grade students!

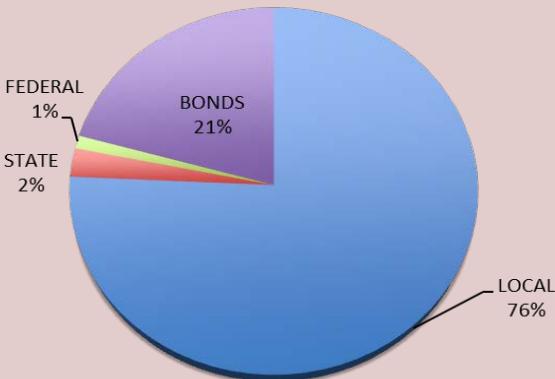
The data is similar for reading, except that Avoca's average student score in 2nd grade is already reflective of the 3rd grade national average, and our average 4th grade MAP score in reading reflects the 6th grade national average!

These charts demonstrate not only how well our children perform against the national average (50%), but the trend data shows how Avoca children widen that superior performance gap the longer they are with us.

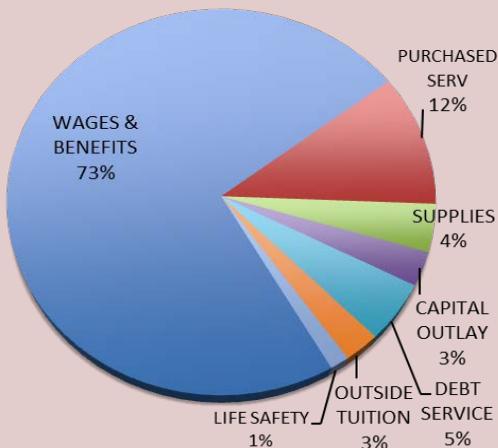
Financial Corner

As political figures in Springfield continue to try to work out a budget agreement for this fiscal year, school districts such as ours need to get on with the business of educating children. The Avoca Board of Education has made fiscal responsibility a priority, and to that end District Administration presented the BOE with a balanced budget at the beginning of Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 and came in right on target for the fourth consecutive year.

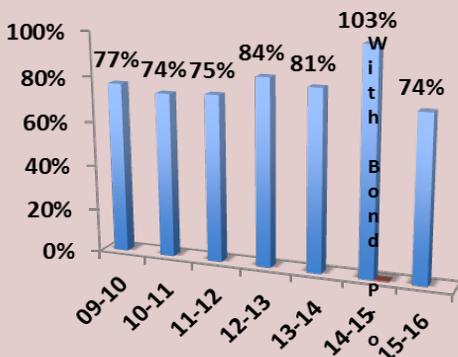
2015 Revenues: Total \$14,857,767



2015 Expenditures: Total \$14,391,216



District Reserves Levels



Highlights of FY15 also include our earning of a AAA bond rating from Standard and Poor's. District financial advisors encouraged Avoca to conduct a competitive sale, recognizing that the timing was excellent for investors to be interested in our municipal bonds. Both of those factors were instrumental in our ability to sell those bonds at a 1.25% repayment interest rate. District officials also structured the repayment of those bonds in such a manner as to maintain the same debt service payment schedule as Avoca has had since 2007.

Looking at the charts that accompany this article you see a large jump in District reserve levels for FY15 followed by a dramatic drop off for FY16. The FY15 bond issuance is earmarked for Health/Life Safety projects that are mandated by the state and will be done during the next school year, which is why our reserve levels drop back to similar levels as we have had previously.

You are encouraged to continue to attend to the financial wrangling going on in Springfield. Rumors of a property tax freeze, a redistribution of state education funds and a shift of pension costs from the state to school districts all have us struggling to confidently calculate financial projections. Any one of those, and of course even more so a combination of them, would have a tremendous impact on our school district and those across the state of Illinois.

Avoca Community Preschool



A child's first school experience sets the stage for future Learning. Our highly Skilled preschool instructors, Julie Barello and Mandy Hale, structure the beginning of their students' year in a uniquely child-centered manner. The Avoca Community Preschool team conducts home visits, structures small group school visits for parents and children, and quickly has the students happily transitioning independently to their classroom.

Our teachers have already completed home visits, having met students in their own home environment. Home visits allow teachers to see the child where he/she is most comfortable and to support learning at home. Home visits also help to strengthen the parent/teacher relationship that is so helpful in a child's learning experience.

We are happy to be serving many siblings of students from previous years and grateful for the new families that continue to enrich our program. Currently, we are providing preschool services to 13 students in the four day a week morning class and 15 students in the five day a week afternoon class and will be adding students with various needs during the school year.

Open enrollment for the 2016-2017 school year begins in January and spots fill up fast. Please watch for our preschool registration banners at Avoca West and Marie Murphy and please come visit if you are interested in enrolling your child. For more information call (847) 728-4142 or go to <http://avoca37.org/communitypreschool>.

From the Board of Education



From left to right:
Rick Zelinsky, Vice President
Jeffrey Greengoss, President
Joel Raynes,
Rosanne Ullman
Sheryl Swibel
Louise Dechovitz
Bill Bazianos

The Board of Education is pleased to report that the 2014 - 2015 school year was a very busy and successful year for our district. Academically, our students continued to perform at the highest levels in the state as evidenced by their latest standardized test scores. Our Board, along with Dr. Jauch and his Administrative team, also brought in a balanced budget, retaining a healthy fund balance for the fourth straight year.

While working diligently on projects from our current strategic plan, as well as government mandates, we moved ahead with our Life Safety/Facilities Plan, guided our students through their initial PARCC evaluation, developed a new Superintendent Evaluation tool and engaged in a very collaborative and productive collective bargaining process with our teachers union.

Back in January, while preparing for the issuance of \$3.7 million in Health/Life Safety bonds to address our aging infrastructure and enhance building security, we earned a 'AAA' long-term bond rating from Standard and Poor's. Our bonds will be repaid at the very favorable rate of 1.25%. This past summer we began our Health/Life Safety work with roof repairs, heating, ventilation and air conditioning replacement and the installation of state of the art security equipment at both of our schools.

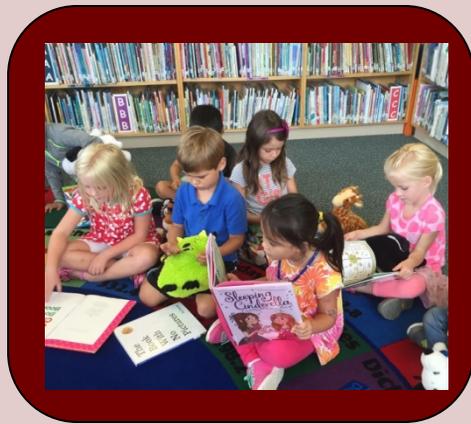
For the current school year we will undertake an inclusive, collaborative Strategic Plan process to guide all aspects of the district, develop systems to enhance and facilitate communication and engagement with our community and continue to provide our students with a world class academic program.

As a Board of Education, we remain committed to excellence in education, fiscal responsibility, transparency with our community and "maximizing the unique potential of each child we serve."

Avoca Mission

The mission of Avoca School District 37 is to maximize the unique potential of each child we serve.

Readers Rock at Avoca West



Each year at Avoca West we do our best to focus on implementing best practice instruction for our students. This year is no exception, and our students and staff will undoubtedly notice a focus on reading for the 2015-2016 school year!

What does this look like in practice? Our teachers will be treated to professional development on implementing guided reading so that our students can become savvy readers. The Common Core State Standards, adopted in 2010, place a great deal of emphasis on developing student stamina for reading and comprehending a wide variety of texts. In addition to working on strategic reading within the classroom, students will be encouraged to put their skills into practice in their recreational reading as well!

Our school-wide "Avoca West Reading All Stars" program will enable grade level teams to set goals for students. This may include the the number of pages read each month, the number of minutes read each month, the number of books read each month, or any other grade appropriate team goal. Teams will be celebrated for reaching their goal, with the *ultimate* goal of getting Mrs. Hutchison to dress as a viking for the day!

Students birthdays will also be celebrated with a ticket for each student to pick out a Birthday Book from the principal's office to keep or to share with friends or classmates. Our ITC director, Susan Geidner, will be encouraging a love of reading in our students by welcoming well known authors. This September Avoca West's 4th & 5th graders met Eliot Schrefer, one of the authors of the popular *Spirit Animals* series. Our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders will hear from children's author Aaron Reynolds in October. Many thanks to our Avoca West parents and community members for continuing to foster a love of reading in our kiddos!



AVOCA BOARD OF EDUCATION
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Veterans Day Pancake Breakfast at Avoca West

*Be Our Guest At The
9th Annual Veterans Day
Pancake Breakfast*

Wednesday, November 11, 2015

Once again, the Avoca School District would like to thank all of the Veterans of our community on Veterans Day by inviting them to the 9th Annual Avoca West Elementary School Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the Student Leadership Council. Breakfast will be served from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in the school cafeteria.

Avoca West Elementary School
235 Beech Drive, Glenview
8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

The breakfast is open to all veterans and their families. Drop-ins are also welcomed! Our students look forward to the opportunity to meet the veterans and thank them for their service to our country. Please R.S.V.P. to Cecilia Beneda at 847-724-6800 or benedac@avoca37.org by Friday, November 6, 2015.

Get in the Halloween Mood!

The Avoca Orchestra Presents:
MM Halloween Orchestra Concert

Wednesday, November 11, 2015

Join the members of our two junior high orchestras as they perform (in costume) works by Bach, Mozart and others. Our program features students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades in our combined District 37/District 39 orchestra program. Can't make the evening performance? Please join us on Thursday, October 29, at 8:00 am. Both performances will take place in the Marie Murphy School gymnasium.

This concert will feature student artists. Audience members will watch a screen projection of a student artist drawing while being inspired by the live music.

Join us for this fun concert! Community members welcome!

Marie Murphy School, 2921 Illinois Road Wilmette
October 29, 2015 – 7:00 p.m..