



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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Below are interesting facts about Oak Park schools dating back to 1900.

- 1900 – Dancing prohibited at graduation
- 1901 – School District #1 of Cicero becomes School District #97 of Cook
- 1902 – Electricity was installed at 64th street school (Julian)
- 1903 – Committee to rename schools convened
- 1903 – Corporal punishment requires the permission of the superintendent
- 1904 – Fire drills established in all two-story buildings
- 1905 – A phone line was installed in the superintendent's office
- 1907 – Schools closed in January for three weeks due to an outbreak of scarlet fever
- 1914 – Teacher pension system adopted
- 1918 – Junior high legislation established
- 1920 – Proof of age required for admittance to school
- 1928 – Attendance officer employed
- 1929 – Librarian employed
- 1931 – Married women could only teach as substitutes
- 1931 – Budget cut due to depression
- 1932 – Delay of opening of school due to shortage of funds
- 1935 – Mandatory retirement set at 68
- 1939 – Flags placed in every classroom
- 1942 – Discussion of 48-week school year due to rise in juvenile delinquents
- 1943 – Federal government moves to freeze wages
- 1944 – Resident teachers allowed to teach during wartime
- 1944 – Physical exams required before entry
- 1945 – 200-day work year established
- 1946 – 14-year old boys allowed to work through War Labor board
- 1946 – Unit district with high school considered
- 1946 – Look Magazine ranks Oak Park Elementary Schools among 100 best in nation
- 1948 – Supreme Court forbids religious instruction in the schools
- 1948 – Wednesday early dismissal for curriculum development work introduced
- 1950 – Marriage no longer deemed cause for dismissal
- 1955 – Seven member board established (down from nine)
- 1956 – School Modernization Program underway; purchase of home near schools for expansion
- 1959 – Full-time secretarial assistants employed at all schools
- 1960 – Spanish instruction introduced in grades seven and eight
- 1960 – Enrichment Summer School program offered
- 1960 – Early Entrance to kindergarten program approved
- 1961 – Meeting with Oak Park River Forest High School and River Forest district to discuss establishing unit district
- 1963 – Educational Television Program suggested for instructional use
- 1965 – Board establishes goal to end meetings no later than 10:30 p.m.
- 1966 – Proposal to build 11th school introduced
- 1967 – First discussion to move to junior high model
- 1967 – Initial discussion of 6-7-8 configuration suggested
- 1968 – Referendum to build new school due to overcrowding fails
- 1970 – Referendum for additions at existing schools approved

- 1971 – Sale of Lowell School (Lake and Forest)
- 1972 – Board adopts Human Dignity Policy
- 1973 – Discussion to close schools during coldest months due to energy crisis
- 1973 – Lunch program established
- 1974 – Dr. Elsie Harley, first African American principal, hired at Beye Elementary School
- 1974 – Committee for Tomorrow’s Schools formed
- 1976 – Board adopts reconfiguration proposal of eight K-6 and two 7-8 schools beginning with 1976-77 school year
- 1979 – Proposal to sell 970 Madison and 541 Madison introduced
- 1980 – First Ethnic Festival held
- 1985 – Hawthorne School renamed Dr. Percy Julian Junior High School
- 1987 – Playground for All Children at Holmes School receives national acclaim
- 1987 – Board approves staggered starting times as cost-savings measure
- 1989 – African American Parents for Purposeful Education (APPLE) group formed
- 1990 – Adoption of District 97 Strategic Plan and Mission Statement
- 1991 – Oak Park Education Foundation formed
- 1991 – Department of Multicultural Education established
- 1991 – Inclusion Program established
- 1992 – Smoke-free schools established
- 1992 – Mentoring Program introduced
- 1995 – Middle Level Education Steering Committee formed
- 1995 – District receives Bright Red Apple award placing it among top nine percent of schools in Illinois (has received it every year since then)
- 1996 – Facilities Study Steering Committee formed
- 1996 – Board adopts Culture of Achievement
- 1997 – District 97 website launched
- 1997 – Promotion Policy introduced
- 1998 – Board votes to move to K-5, 6-8 configuration
- 1999 – Referendum to build two new middle schools passes
- 2001 – In-curricular Spanish instruction for all elementary grades implemented
- 2002 – Completion of two new middle schools August 2002
- 2002 – Change of Emerson to Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School
- 2007 – District adopts comprehensive five-year strategic plan
- 2009 – Full-day kindergarten program implemented district wide
- 2011 – Voters of Oak Park approved limiting rate increase
- 2011 – Summer capital projects include addition and secured entrance at Lincoln Elementary School and secured entrance at Longfellow Elementary School
- 2011 – District launches redesigned family of websites
- 2011 – Successful passage of the first operating rate referendum the district has sought in more than 20 years
- 2012 – District begins implementation of the International Baccalaureate program at its two middle schools
- 2012 – District implements Project Lead the Way at its two middle schools, which is a project-based, middle school design program that introduces students to elements of science, technology, engineering and math
- 2012 – District replaces outdated classroom furniture at Beye Elementary School during the summer
- 2012 – District completes upgrades to schoolyards at Beye, Holmes and Longfellow elementary schools
- 2013 – District is selected as one of 64 districts from across the state that is partnering with the Illinois State Board of Education on the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), which is a pilot program to assess the school readiness of individual kindergarten students and identify gaps in development
- 2013 – District 97, District 200 and the Village of Oak Park approve an intergovernmental agreement for the purchase of services pertaining to early childhood education, as well as a contract for early childhood education services; actions were taken in support of the Collaboration for Early Childhood’s vision of creating a comprehensive, integrated early childhood system in Oak Park

- 2013 – District completes upgrades to schoolyards at Hatch, Irving, Mann and Whittier elementary schools
- 2013 – District replaces outdated classroom furniture at Hatch, Lincoln and Mann elementary schools during the summer
- 2013 – District introduces new elementary school report card that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards
- 2014 – District launches iLearn 97 technology initiative in January
- 2014 – District undertakes temperature control pilot in an effort to identify potential solutions for temperature and humidity-related issues in its schools
- 2014 – District performs work during the summer to improve accessibility at several elementary schools, including installing an elevator at Whittier Elementary School
- 2014 – District completes upgrades to the green space at Brooks and Julian middle schools
- 2014 – District replaces outdated classroom furniture at Holmes, Irving, Longfellow and Whittier elementary schools during the summer