

# Lt. Gov. Stratton commits to support for teachers of color

BY LANA ABDALLAH AND NUHA ABDESSALAM, Contributing Writers

Lt. Gov. Julianna Stratton visited Governors State University on Tuesday, April 12, to continue her campaign to address Illinois' shortage of teachers and to promote teaching as a profession for students of color.

Stratton met with GSU President Cheryl Green and faculty and students to solicit feedback during her statewide tour of public universities, as she gathers information that will help shape the administration's education policies.

At a press conference following their meetings, Green introduced Stratton, vowing that GSU is "removing barriers to graduate more educators for the state of Illinois and for our children."

The lieutenant governor stressed the role education is playing for the administration.

"Education is one of the top priorities in our state," she said, pointing out that "we have raised our overall commitment to \$12 billion for education in the latest budget. That includes a \$122 million increase in



Illinois Lt. Gov. Julianna Stratton

MAP (Monetary Award Program) grant funding, making Illinois the best place to send your child to college."

Stratton pointed out that the commitment to serve students of color meant there would be "more than double the funding in

scholarships for students of color."

When asked how the community could help push the educational goals forward, Stratton said:

"Well, that's such a great question because one of the things I've heard as I've been traveling to these various campuses is that there are a number of students of color in middle school and high school who are being discouraged from going into the field of education.

"If we want to make sure that there is a diverse teacher pipeline of those who can be recruited into this field, we have

to make sure, first of all, that we are not discouraging our students from going into this very noble profession.

"The second thing we've talked about today here on GSU's campus is the need to also focus on teacher retention of teachers and educators of color; those two things go hand in hand. How do we make sure teachers feel supported while they are currently teaching?"

"I think one of the statistics I heard of were many teachers of color, I think is a majority, I don't know the exact number, end up leaving the profession within five years, and we know that has been exacerbated because of the pandemic. So, we have to listen to educators to find out what more can be done to stay in the classroom, teaching our students, as well as making sure there is a diverse pipeline that's coming along the way that those same teachers can mentor.

"Lastly, I'd like to say how important it is for us to recognize and share the statistics and data that show having diverse teachers improves the outcomes of all students."

In her remarks, Green said: "I am excit-

ed to promote educational opportunities for rural students, marginalized students, under-represented minorities, women and all the citizens of Illinois."

She emphasized the strides GSU has made in making education more widely available. As an example, she pointed out that the Bachelor of Arts program has been redesigned to accommodate increasingly diverse work schedules. She stressed the flexibility of the courses available throughout the day and on weekends.

She also mentioned recent grants, including one from Will County and Amazon that will facilitate the development of an 18-month paraprofessional program for early education.

Representing students at the press conference was Haley Pallella, president of GSU's Education Association, who lauded the school's dedication to education training.

"GSU has provided me with the knowledge and skills needed through our intensive course work, meaningful field experiences and supportive faculty. Becoming a teacher today is more important than ever."

## Software allows D153 to limit students screen time

BY MARILYN THOMAS  
mthomas@hfchronicle.com

How many hours should be enough screen time for children?

Homewood District 153 is experimenting with a new software feature that allows it to shut off district network access to student devices between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The trial will go on through the end of the school year, said Beth White, director of technology.

"We would like to promote healthy learning habits for our students," she said.

Students who want to be on computers

after 10 p.m. can use their personal devices.

When the initiative was announced in early April, it was described as a way "to help students and families take a 'pause' from technology during night time hours." White said the district will be looking for feedback to the time limit in late May.

When schools shut down for the pandemic in March 2020, District 153 made devices available to each student. The district continued that policy, so 3-8 grade students have kept their devices.

White stressed that District 153 can manage the content, "Students' internet

access is always content filtered on district devices, so they are not able to get to inappropriate websites."

### Managing the hardware

The District 153 technology department maintains the 1,900 devices. The major repairs are for broken screens and broken hinges. It is estimated between 15 and 20 chargers go missing each week.

This school year, repairs for the student devices has been approximately \$35,000, but because the district is self-insured, \$28,000 of that cost had to come from the district's budget, Superintendent Scott McAlister said.

The school board agreed in March to increase fees and to start charging fees for students in early grades.

"Currently, we charge two fees associated with devices for grades 5-8. The first is a device fee of \$25, and the second is the insurance fee of \$20," White said. "At the start of this year, only grades 5-8 took their devices home with them every day. For next year, grades 3-8 will be taking their devices home, so we are simply adding the fees for grades 3-4. We also will begin charging the device fee only for grades K-2, since each student is assigned a device, but does not take them home every day."



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