

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Dr. John Palan

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is Key-School Reorganization Oral History project

Interview # AI-A-L-2013-011

Dr. John Palan, Superintendent of Grant Park Community Unit #6, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key - School Reorganization* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 5, 2016 Location: Grant Park, Illinois (School District Office)

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Phil Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:14 / 1.23 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 22, 2016.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Dr. John Palan, *Education is Key-School Reorganization*, AI-A-L-2013-011

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Dr. John Palan was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1970, and graduated from Perry, Iowa High School in 1988. He earned his bachelor's degree from Loras University in 1993, majoring in education. He began his teaching career in St. Anne, Illinois, where he spent the next eighteen years. This included serving as the dean and principal at St. Anne Elementary School, and then as its Superintendent. Later, Palan served as the dual Superintendent of both the High School and Elementary Districts (districts #256 and #302). At the time of this interview, he was the Superintendent of Grant Park, a district of 520 students including 165 in the High School. John earned advanced degrees from Lewis University in 1996, Governors State in 1999, and a doctorate from National Louis University in 2005.

This interview explores how Grant Park has maintained its independence as a small unit district located at the northern edge of Kankakee County. Located along Highway 1, the district hugs the border with Indiana, as well as the south suburban area of Will County and larger districts to the south and west. Dr. Palan discussed the challenges facing a small district, including limited staffing, class size, course offerings, and finances. This discussion led to the review of course offerings in the district, cooperative sports, advanced placement courses, participation in the County Vocational Center, technology upgrades, and a spirit of academic excellence. Recently, the high school received recognition through the State Board of Education and *U.S. News and World Report* as a high achieving school. Finally, the importance of the school district to the success of the community and its economic development was explored.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Grant Park Unit School District #6; Illinois school districts #256 and #302; serving as a dual superintendent (Elementary and High School Districts); Advanced Placement Courses; challenges of small school districts; link between school success and community success; area vocational centers; parental involvement in small schools

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