

Administrative Offices

245 W. Exchange Street
Sycamore, IL 60178
Phone: (815) 899-8100
Fax: (815) 899-8110
www.syc427.org

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 71
Sycamore, IL 60178

Board of Education

Jim Dombek, President
Dannie Stanbery, Vice President
Donald Clayberg, Secretary
Barb King
Jay Montgomery
Steve Nelson
Diane Tyrrell



Dr. Wayne Riesen, Superintendent
Mr. Luke Gbwiak, Asst. Superintendent
Mrs. Kathy Countryman, Asst. Superintendent

Sycamore Public Schools

Empowering All Learners To Succeed In Their World

Community Unit School District #427

December 2008

Letter from the Superintendent, Dr. Wayne Riesen



On behalf of the District 427 Board of Education and everyone at Sycamore Community Schools, greetings to all parents and members of our community. As always, time seems to move very quickly and it's hard to believe that our new school year is nearing the half way point. Because of the nature of our school district and community, each year is a busy one at District 427 and this one is certainly no exception. In addition to carrying out the normal activities of a school year, the district is currently involved in three major planning initiatives. In an effort to be future-focused and prepare students for tomorrow's society, the school district is conducting a complete review of our strategic design plan. For three consecutive days in October, a 90-member task force participated in spirited discussions to help define our future mission, vision, beliefs and values, and student outcomes. Once complete, our new strategic design will serve as the foundation for all future decisions that are made with regards to programming and budget.

Second, planning for the future of middle school education is part of the Board's Master Facility Plan as adopted in 2006. Without a doubt, the development of future middle school programs and facilities are now the top priority in regards to planning for the future. There have recently been a series of steering committee meetings to help guide us in the development of future middle school programming. These discussions will continue over the next several months with the desired outcome being an appropriate long-range plan for our middle school education.

Our third major initiative is the redrawing of the elementary school boundaries throughout the district. The need for this project is driven by the fact that our fifth elementary school will open its doors next fall. As promised, we anticipate completing this process in January of 2009. In addition to a greeting from our Board President, also included are a facility and construction update, information on the new SHS administrative team, a communications update, winter weather procedures, and several other items of interest. I hope that you enjoy reading these newsletters throughout the school year as it is our intent to keep our entire community updated about the state of our school district. As always, please feel free to contact me if you have questions regarding any of this information. On behalf of the Sycamore School District, I hope you and your families have a wonderful holiday season.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Letter from the Board President, Jim Dombek



As expected, 2008 has been a very busy year for the Sycamore School District. Thanks to the support of the community, construction on additions to North, West and Southeast elementary schools were completed in time for the beginning of the school year in August. Additionally, construction is now well underway on our newest elementary school at Plank and Lindgren Roads. Our students continue to advance in academic achievement in 2008 and all of our schools met or exceeded the annual yearly progress standards established by the "No Child Left Behind" Act. Going forward, we are preparing to meet the challenge of making progress as standards ratchet up to higher and higher levels. These are remarkable achievements that will serve the District well into the future.

We are proud to say that 2008 has been a year of promises delivered and our 2007-2008 budget finished "in the black" without a deficit. The Board implemented a process to formalize a middle school philosophy which will form the basis for planning to meet our middle school needs well into the future. With a three-day community workshop this fall, the Board began the process of updating the District's Strategic Design which serves as a blueprint for all that we do. A review and update of the District's policy manual has been completed and was unanimously approved by the Board. In addition, we have continued to work on communicating to all of our stakeholders more effectively and we remain committed to fiscal stability for the District.

We have accomplished great things in 2008 and we look forward to an even greater 2009. The District 427 Board of Education continues to remain future-focused. Our construction managers assure us that we are on schedule to complete the new elementary school on time to open in the fall 2009. In early 2009 we will redefine attendance boundaries for our new and existing elementary schools. The Board will also be focusing on current and future financial conditions and will plot a course for financial stability in these troubled times. Planning to accommodate future growth will continue.

The number of initiatives and the amount of work the Board has taken on this year is indicative of the hard work and dedication of its members and of the District 427 administration and staff. If you happen to see Dannie Stanbery, Don Clayberg, Jay Montgomery, Barb King, Steve Nelson or Diane Tyrrell, please take time to thank them for a job well done.

Last, but by no means least, I want to take the time to thank all of you. The support that the community has given to the District has been outstanding. None of our accomplishments and future goals would be achieved without your support. One of the things that sets the Sycamore Schools apart from other districts is broad-based community support and we certainly recognize and celebrate that fact. Please give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done. On behalf of the Sycamore Community Unit School District 427 Board of Education, I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year!



School Communications Update

In an effort to continually enhance the delivery of information to parents and the community, the Sycamore School District has three relatively new communication tools either in operation or plans for the immediate future. It is our philosophy that parents and all community members should be knowledgeable about their school district and the following is an update on our three new communication initiatives:

Parent Portal NOW OPEN – As promised, the new District 427 Parent Portal is now open and available for use. The portal is a wonderful new tool that enables parents to continuously monitor their children's progress and performance on grades, assignments, and attendance. The information is obviously confidential and available for parents to view only their child's performance. You can gain access to the Parent Portal by going to the district website at www.syc427.org. There you will find instructions and a help desk to aid you in gaining access to the portal. For parents who do not have a home computer or Internet access, kiosks (computers) are available at each building for your use during regular building hours. In addition to the Parent Portal, the kiosks will also grant access to the mealtime and webstore programs. Please feel free to contact us if we can be of any further assistance with this new opportunity.

District Communicator – We are now in our second year of offering the District Communicator. This program is an e-mail list serve that allows the school district to quickly communicate emergencies, updates, announcements, and newsletters to all subscribers. This information arrives to home computers and/or cell phones for those who have signed up for the service. The service is currently being utilized by approximately 1800 families and our district would like to increase usage by our stakeholders. This is a free service and for directions to subscribe, please go to the district website at www.syc427.org and click on the Sycamore CUSD District Communicator to sign up for automated e-updates. Instructions are provided and you can subscribe directly on line.

School Messenger – Although later than anticipated, school district officials plan to add the new School Messenger. This service will provide similar types of information through the use of the telephone. Once available, the superintendent will have the ability to immediately send out multiple phone messages regarding important announcements, emergencies and weather-related cancellations. We will continually keep you informed of our progress as we move closer to the implementation of this new tool.

We hope that many of you take advantage of these opportunities and as always, please feel free to contact us at Sycamore Schools if you have any questions.

Winter Weather Procedures



Summer has come and gone and because the winter of 2009 is rapidly approaching, it is time to start planning for snow. Because of the potential implications of snow and ice, school districts need to prepare for challenges and situations brought on by winter weather. If you are a parent, the following information should help you prepare if inclement weather necessitates changes in the school day.

District #427 School Cancellation Procedures

TIMELINE: If it becomes necessary to cancel classes, we will make every effort to make the decision by 6:00 a.m.

OPTIONS: If it becomes necessary to alter the school day because of winter weather, one of the following options will be used:

1. **Classes Cancelled for the Day** - Generally speaking, when classes are cancelled, all activities for the day/night are cancelled as well. Exceptions can be made regarding high school activities as determined by weather conditions later in the day.
2. **One Hour Late Start** - The start of the school day could be delayed by one hour if improving weather conditions are likely. If this option is used, the school day and bus pickups, etc. will be exactly one hour later than normal.
3. **Early Dismissal** - Although rare, this option would be used if students were already in school and deteriorating weather conditions become imminent before the end of the school day. In this case, individual schools will use the parental contact information contained on the Early Dismissal form as filled out at registration.

NOTIFICATION OF CANCELLATIONS: You may go to the following sources of information to receive cancellation information. Please do not call the Administrative Center or individual school buildings as their phones are needed to make out going calls.

WLBK 1360 AM WNIU 89.5 FM
 WDKB B95 FM WIFR Channel 23 Rockford
 WREX WGN
 Daily Chronicle Website (www.daily-chronicle.com)
 District 427 Website (www.syc427.org)



Facility and Construction Update

You will recall that in April of 2007, the Sycamore community approved a building referendum for the construction of a new elementary school and additions and renovations to West, Southeast, and North Elementary Schools. Additions and renovations to the existing schools were completed as planned as students and staff began to enjoy the improvements when school opened this past August. Improvements included new classrooms, gymnasiums, and renovations throughout the buildings. Phase 2 of the Southeast Elementary School project has recently been completed with kindergarten classes moving to their new rooms on November 3, 2008. It is also important to note that, as a major component of our facility plan, all district buildings now have improved safety and security and are locked throughout each day. Although not part of the referendum project, a new access road and parking lot expansion at South Prairie was also completed this past summer. The new project has helped to eliminate congestion at one of the largest elementary schools in the district.

The construction of the new elementary school continues to proceed on schedule with a planned opening of August 2009. As of this date, the entire building is under roof and most windows have been installed. Approximately 90% of the interior block has been completed as well. The excellent progress will allow workers to continue interior work throughout the winter months. The new school is located in the northern part of our community off Plank Road in the Sycamore Creek Subdivision. Please feel free to drive by and take a look!



North Elementary School



Southeast Elementary School



West Elementary School



South Prairie Elementary School Access Road

Meet the New SHS Administrative Staff



Steve Balster, Curt Johansen, Brad Barnhardt, and Tim Carlson

The leadership team at Sycamore High School has a complete new look with all four gentlemen either new to their positions or the school district. Leading the team is new SHS Principal Mr. Tim Carlson. Mr. Carlson has lived in DeKalb County for 41 years and has been on staff at SHS for the past 16 years. Tim earned an AS Degree from Kishwaukee College, and his Bachelor's and two Masters Degrees from Northern Illinois University.

New to our school district and joining the administrative staff is Assistant Principal Mr. Steve Balster. Steve grew up in DeKalb, graduating from DHS in 1988. His previous administrative duties included employment at both Geneva and St. Charles East High Schools. Mr. Balster graduated from Illinois State University and he has earned graduate degrees from Northern Illinois and Aurora Universities.

Also joining the staff is new SHS Dean of Students, Mr. Brad Barnhardt. Brad is a familiar face in the Sycamore School District as he has taught second grade at South Prairie Elementary for the past seven years. Mr. Barnhardt was originally from Bismarck, North Dakota, where he received a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Mary where he also played college football. Brad also earned his Master's Degree from Aurora University in 2007.

Completing the administrative staff is new SHS Athletic Director Mr. Curt Johansen. Curt is a 19-year veteran educator as a teacher and coach and comes to Sycamore from City High School in Iowa City, Iowa. He was also an assistant basketball coach at Coe College. Mr. Johansen earned his Bachelor's Degree from Grandview College in Des Moines, Iowa and his Master's from Drake University.

If the opportunity presents itself, please welcome all four gentlemen to their new positions at Sycamore High School.

All District 427 Schools Make AYP

It is our pleasure to inform you that all District 427 schools successfully made AYP as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. AYP, otherwise known as Adequate Yearly Progress, is the standard defined by the act in which schools across the country are measured by. Factors that are figured into the determination are standardized test scores, along with attendance and graduation rates. Each year the benchmarks continue to increase making this achievement more difficult for school districts with multiple buildings such as ours. Congratulations to all involved as this is a wonderful reflection of our students, staff, and the entire community of Sycamore.

Community Schools Federation

One of the current and very successful initiatives of the Sycamore School District is serving the needs of many of our children and families either before or after school hours. It is with great pleasure that we inform you that the District 427 Spartan REACH/OSCAR Program has been chosen by the Community Schools Federation to serve as a model for other districts and communities. Sycamore was among only three such programs across the State of Illinois selected for this honor. **Congratulations to Mr. Tony Stahl and his entire staff on this great accomplishment!**

District 427 Announces Community Forum

The District 427 Board of Education is proud to announce an upcoming informational presentation. School officials will address and update attendees on the major initiatives currently taking place across the school district. Topics will include strategic planning, middle school education, and an update on the revised redistricting plan. All members of the Sycamore Community are invited to attend. The details are as follows:

DATE: Thursday, January 15, 2008
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Sycamore High School Auditorium

Model Drawing of New Elementary School Off of Plank Road in the Sycamore Creek Subdivision

