

SUNSET RIDGE

School District 29 Board Newsletter

www.sunsetridge29.net

April 2010

Cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time



Dr. Linda Vieth

Dear District 29 Community Member,

We are now in the final weeks of another school year. Once again we find ourselves asking, "Where did the time go?"

We continue to be very proud of our students and their many accomplishments. They are working hard on their schoolwork and are making great strides. Some have found time to participate in special events and activities and we applaud those efforts. See page 6.

Congratulations to our Sunset Ridge Principal Interview Team, which consisted of Stacy Shane, Debbie Papas, Michele Widdes, Barb Egofski, Kristin Welch, Jamie O'Connor, Ruth Bartell, Mary Frances Greene, and Ed Stange. They participated in an extensive process to help me find the next principal of Sunset Ridge School. Their successful efforts resulted in the selection of Dr. Shelley Carey. Dr. Carey will officially begin at Sunset Ridge on July 1. Read more about our new principal on page 3.

Our facilities study continues to move forward with the completion of four Community Engagement Meetings. The meetings have provided interested community members the opportunity to discuss our facility needs, suggest ideas, view conceptual drawings, participate in an analysis of the drawings, and help identify potential solutions. Three meetings remain on the schedule: May 4, May 25 and June 22. It is not too late to join in the process! To learn more turn to page 4.

The Board and administration are monitoring District finances closely as they plan for the 2010-2011 school year and beyond. We recently took steps to reduce a projected deficit caused by rising expenses, a loss of state funding, and flat real estate tax revenue growth, which is capped at 0.1%. The Board and administration have eliminated approximately \$400,000 from next year's budget. Care was taken to minimize the impact on students and the instructional program when making reductions. Class sizes and the number of sections per grade next year will not be affected by these decisions. This close scrutiny of spending is a priority of the administration and the board. For more information on District revenue, please refer to the article on page 7.

Even though the school year is in its final weeks, Sunset Ridge and Middlefork will continue to be buzzing with activity until the final school bell rings on June 4.

There are many wonderful year-end traditions to look forward to, including Middlefork's vocabulary parade, Field Day, Spring Sing on

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District Schools Honored for Academic Excellence

In February, District 29 was honored with the SchoolSearch 2010 Bright Red Apple Award for educational excellence. Sunset Ridge School also earned the Illinois State Board of Education Academic Excellence Award for 2009.

District 29 is among 83 Illinois school districts of the 869 districts in the state to be honored with the Bright Red Apple Award. SchoolSearch is an educational research and consulting firm that works with major companies by

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Students in the Math Club met weekly from October through January to practice solving problems individually as well as collaboratively. Twenty club members were among over 300 participants in the Latin School math meet in January. The sixth grade team took 4th place overall and the seventh grade team was awarded 5th place. Nine students also competed in the Math Counts competition at Oakton Community College in February.

Educating Hearts and Minds...One Child at a Time

Cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time

The District 29 mission statement is more than words on paper; it is the philosophy that guides teaching and learning every day. Beginning with before school clubs and study sessions, throughout the day, and on into after school sports and co-curricular activities, students are engaged and encouraged by a community of caring adults, one child at a time. Top to bottom and left to right: The 6-7-8th grade band, 3rd graders learning to play recorder, Pioneer Day at the Grove, 7th graders visiting the 8th grade Holocaust Museum in the learning center, Dr. Greene reading to 5th graders during Poetry Month, Pajama Day storyteller assembly and reading buddies, 1st grade Explorers' Club monkey group, kindergarten scuba divers, 4th grade play, 2nd grade Chinese New Year lunch.



An Interview With Dr. Shelley Carey, New Sunset Ridge Principal

Certain words keep recurring in a conversation with Dr. Shelley Carey: "I love... being an educator, daily visits in the classrooms, encouraging and inspiring the *whole child* (also a recurring phrase)..." Dr. Carey speaks with such passion about her vision for education and Sunset Ridge School that her own words describe her best.

Q: Describe the path that ultimately brought you to District 29.

A: A native of Gary, Indiana, I attended Cornell College in Iowa, where I developed my love for being an educator. My first teaching positions were with the Chicago Archdiocese schools. During those years I earned my Master's Degree in educational leadership from the University of Illinois-Chicago. After teaching for 9 years, I put my Master's to work as a student teaching supervisor before serving as principal for 10 years of St. Tarcissus School.

When I moved to Glencoe 14 years ago, I became interested in suburban education and became assistant principal at Euclid School in Mount Prospect. I have been serving as principal of Willard School in Evanston since 2001. A lifelong learner myself, I earned my Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from National-Louis University in 2004.

Q: What attracted you to Sunset Ridge School?

A: I am excited to get back with older children, whom I taught early in my career. I enjoy



Dr. Shelley Carey

encouraging the students to have an active role in their own learning, to develop a strong sense of who they are, and to explore the limitless possibilities available to them.

The smaller size of the school appeals to me as well, with the opportunities it affords for shared leadership, collaboration and becoming part of the fabric of the larger community.

Q: What is your philosophy of education?

A: We are all lifelong learners; each of us is an unfolding story. Our role as educators is to appreciate where each child is in his or her development and inspire the whole child to grow with confidence and empowerment. Teaching to 'the whole child' connects the affective, cognitive, creative, cultural and physical developmental areas.

Our true purpose, as the Sunset Ridge mission statement says so well, is to create avenues for learning within the context of a community of learners, one child at a time.

Q: How do you see your role as principal?

A: I have good organizational skills and an ability to see the big picture and orchestrate the component pieces. I like to be highly visible in the building, engaging students and supporting teachers. Through frequent informal walk-throughs I am able to become part of the activity of the day.

Q: What are your goals for the first year and beyond?

A: I am very much looking forward to getting to know the students and their families. I will also be looking at how we can build on the outstanding educational environment already in place. I am a strong advocate for ongoing professional exchange. My goal is to inspire and to be inspired.

And Others Say...

"Dr. Carey impressed me with her warmth, professionalism and intellect. She is an excellent communicator and strong instructional leader. Her extensive experience will provide Sunset Ridge School and its learning community with strong leadership and educational vision."

Dr. Linda Vieth, Superintendent

"Dr. Carey is bright and enthusiastic and really believes in the children. She told us "every child belongs to every one of us and teaching them is a team effort." She believes in working collaboratively with the teachers, staff and parents. I am confident she will be a good fit at Sunset Ridge."

Debbie Papas, School Board representative on the interview committee

"It was clear on my first day at Willard School that Dr. Carey had worked hard to build a positive climate for the students and staff. The child-centered, warm, caring environment that she and her staff created was a great place to learn, not only for the students but for me as a student teacher."

Trevor Hope, 5th grade teacher

Community Engagement Meetings Address Facility Needs and Solutions

District 29 continues to move forward with its Strategic Plan goal to study and address facility needs. As stated at the beginning of the process in September 2008, this study is intended to be a thoughtful analysis of “academic spaces designed to support the changing needs of the student learner. We see this as a thorough evaluation of our current facilities with full review of our building utilization and then a comprehensive visionary plan for the near future and the next generation of students.”

Four Community Engagement Meetings have already been conducted, and additional meetings are planned for later this spring. Led by BLDD Architects Sam Johnson and Tim McGrath, the meetings have been attended by community members, District 29 parents, teachers, Board of Education members, and administrators. All interested community members are invited to attend and be part of this important process.

At the initial meeting on January 26, Dr. Vieth and BLDD Architects presented background information and shared research about the District’s two buildings gathered during last year’s survey and analysis. Participants toured Sunset Ridge School, and the next steps of the study were outlined.

The second meeting on February 16 began with a tour of Middlefork School. Following the tour Dr. Vieth and Mr. Johnson discussed how changes in American culture have influenced our education system and consequently, our school facilities. Dr. Vieth also shared photos and examples illustrating how space limitations are currently addressed at both Middlefork and Sunset Ridge. Participants were then



A science lab is multi-purposed as a music room.

divided into groups and given the opportunity to brainstorm ways to improve the District’s facilities. Each group suggested various conceptual ideas and presented them to audience.

The third Community Engagement Meeting was held on March 16. After a brief recap of previous meetings, Mr. Johnson and Mr. McGrath presented several concept drawings for both Middlefork and Sunset Ridge. The drawings illustrated various options, ranging from additions to address specific space needs to a new 4-8 building and a new K-8 building. Using the District’s Facilities Priority Guidelines, meeting participants worked in small groups to identify strengths and weaknesses of each plan. Each small group shared its reaction to the drawings and presented its top choices to the entire group.

At the April 6 meeting the BLDD architects shared additional concept drawings and led participants in further analysis of them.

Our next meeting will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 4 in the Sunset Ridge Learning Center. We will continue discussing the concepts and work toward identifying those plans which best address District needs and its Priority Guidelines.

All community members are encouraged to participate in this important process! It is not necessary that you attend all meetings. Please join us whenever you are able. Future meetings will take place on May 4, May 25 and June 22.



Hallways often serve as break-out space where students can work in small groups.

For additional information about the facilities study and Priority Guidelines, please visit our District website at www.sunsetridge29.net. Click on *Our District* and then *Facilities Study*.

Board Approves Foreign Language for Grades 1-8

At its March meeting the Board of Education approved extending the District foreign language program to include grades 1-4 and to expand instruction in grade 6 beyond three days per week. An additional teacher will be hired to implement the program in the lower grades.

The Foreign Language Action Plan Committee, consisting of eight faculty, administrators, parents and school board representatives began meeting in February, 2009, to research and analyze foreign language options and enhancements. They gathered information on best practices in foreign language instruction and reviewed the programs in neighboring schools prior to conducting a parent survey in the fall.

Survey Results Favor Expanded Program

The survey elicited a high response rate with good participation across all grade levels. Respondents showed strong support for beginning foreign language instruction in the primary grades, with only 3% recommending no change. They also indicated a clear preference for Spanish as the language offering.

Research indicates that children who study a foreign language before the age of 11 have a greater ability to learn and excel in pronunciation and develop a sense of openness and appreciation of other cultures.

Best practices advocate the sequential development of one language over time and

demonstrate that frequency of use is a key factor in learning vocabulary. Following this model, students will receive Spanish instruction across all grades. The curriculum in the primary grades will focus on the study of Spanish-speaking cultures as well as language acquisition. Instruction will take place three days per week to maximize opportunities for the children to practice what they are learning.

“We are all very excited to bring foreign language instruction to our younger students,” Dr. Mary Frances Greene, Middlefork Principal, noted. “When I mentioned to a class of third graders that they would begin Spanish class in fourth grade, they cheered!”

Dear District 29 Community,

On behalf of the District 29 Board of Education I would like to invite you to participate in the next Facilities Community Engagement meeting on May 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sunset Ridge Learning Center. As you have read in the facilities article in this edition of the District Newsletter, the District has been engaged in a comprehensive facilities study for the past year. The process is collaborative, involving parents, community members, teachers, administrators, the Board of Education, and the architectural firm BLDD. This process has encompassed more than a review of our bricks and mortar. It has provided an opportunity to evaluate how education has changed over time and the role that school buildings play in facilitating outstanding educational delivery. The architectural concepts developed thus far reflect not just where the District wants to be today, but where our Strategic Plan may take us in the future.

The collective voices of parents, community members, and staff are very important in this process, and very welcome. I am aware of how difficult it is to share an evening during the week, but

the Board of Education would like to hear your opinion. I think it is important to note that while concept drawings and their companion costs will be discussed on May 4, this is still very much a work in progress. At each of the community engagement meetings I have stressed that this study is not about “bells and whistles.” It is about confirming that our District stays on the right path in terms of our commitment to educational excellence. Whatever the outcome, we will be stronger as a District for engaging in this dialogue.

The Board of Education is well aware of the economic climate and committed to prudent fiscal management. The cost, scope, and timing of these concepts are very important considerations as we refine our ideas. Please consider engaging in this dialogue with us as we move forward on May 4, and throughout the spring. We want to hear your voice.

Sincerely,

Phoebe Raymond

President, District 29 Board of Education

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May 27, and grade level portfolio nights. Sunset Ridge students will delight and entertain us in Seussical, the Musical on May 5 and 6, and the junior high band and string ensemble will perform a concert on May 13. We are also looking forward to Evening with the Eagles, Sunset Ridge awards assemblies, the PTO Family Fun Fair on May 22, and Eighth Grade Graduation on June 2.

I hope to see many of you at these various school and community events. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any of the information contained in this edition of the Board Newsletter. Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

Linda J. Vieth, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Awards, continued from page 1

providing school information to their relocating families.

Across the state 438 elementary and high schools earned the Academic Excellence Award for 2009. To merit this award schools must demonstrate exemplary academic performance over time. Specific criteria are based upon student and schoolwide performance on the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT). (At Middlefork only 3rd graders take these tests.)

The School Board congratulates the District for earning these awards and offers its appreciation to the entire school community for the ongoing commitment to academic excellence.



Hats Off To:

The School Board honored the following people at recent meetings:

Linda Curry, Sunset Ridge School Nurse, who completing the School Nurse Certification Program at UIC College of Nursing

Kellie Rouse, Kindergarten, who earned a Masters Degree in reading from Benedictine University

Becky Tobias, 6th Grade Math, who earned a Masters Degree in Special Education from Northeastern University

Terrie Simmons, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance, who was elected to the Board of Directors of the Association of School Business Officials International

Panther basketball team members, Sunset Ridge cheerleaders and volunteers, who initiated and participated in a basketball event with students involved in the North Suburban Special Recreation Association

Jonathan Brusica, 8th grade, for serving as Sunset Ridge mascot
The District also congratulates:

Lisa Garner, 8th grade teacher associate, who earned Middle School endorsement from Olivet Nazarene University

Charlene Entman, Technology Facilitator, who was quoted in *The Socially Networked Classroom* by William Kist and presented at the Illinois Computer Education (ICE) Conference with **Dr. Linda Vieth**, Superintendent

34 Sunset Ridge students who presented at the ICE and Students Involved with Technology conferences
Finalist **Joy Weinberg** and semi-finalists **Andrew Blechman, Paul Dickenson, Ashley Khan, and Jack Trimpe**, 7th grade, who placed in the Letters about Literature national reading and writing competition presented by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target stores and the Illinois Center for the Book.



Clockwise from top left: Panthers, Jonathan Brusica, SIT presenters, cheerleaders

Service in the Schools



Service to others is an integral aspect of social-emotional learning in District 29. Some activities are school or Districtwide, while others take place within grade levels or individual classrooms. Many are interwoven into curricular topics; others develop in response to identified needs. Above (l.-r.): In January students made lunches for the homeless at Middlefork Service Night, sponsored by the Character Education Parent Committee. The entire school community combined efforts in February to raise money for Haitian relief. The PTO organized the “Have a Heart for Haiti” fundraiser, Middlefork students collected “Change for Haiti,” the Sunset Ridge Student Council and Mrs. Ruggie’s and Mrs. Polak’s advisories raised additional funds through after-school sales, and the 5th grade newspaper heightened awareness by dedicating an entire issue to Haiti. All told, these efforts raised over \$5000. The District thanks Dominick’s, Lou Malnati’s, Peapod, Trader Joe’s, Mr. Albro, and the many families and faculty members who contributed to and/or participated in these events.

Below (l.-r.): First grader Ely Ryba invited the entire first grade to help celebrate his birthday. In lieu of gifts



he requested donations to Critter Corral rescue for guinea pigs and raised \$600 for the piggies.

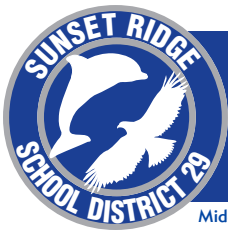
Building bridges between the youngest and oldest at Sunset Ridge, mentors from Mrs. Widdes’ language arts class aided Mrs. Zogby’s 4th graders with their research projects.

District Receives Very Little Funding From State

Sunset Ridge School District 29 receives 91% of its income from local property taxes, 1% from Federal sources, and almost 5% from interest earnings and miscellaneous sources. The State of Illinois contributes less than 3% of our total revenues. Therefore District 29 has little reliance on the amount and timing of state funding.

As of mid-March the state owed schools nearly \$1 billion, and it will be drastically reducing spending on education in the next fiscal year. Because of the uncertainty of when or if District 29 will receive any funds from the State of Illinois during the remainder of this fiscal year and FY2011, we have removed all state funding from our projections going forward. Once we have more assurance of state funding, we may add it back into the projections.

To offset this reduction in state revenue, a Tax Cap limit of the 0.1% CPI increase in property tax revenue expected in 2010/2011, and other pressures from the economy, the administration and school board are diligently considering options to trim spending and secure other financing resources for our programs.



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District 29 website
www.sunsetridge29.net

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Future Kindergartners Invited to Visit Middlefork on May 20

Prospective kindergartners and their parents are invited to attend a Kindergarten Open House at Middlefork School on Thursday, May 20 between 3:15-4:30 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m. Students will have an opportunity to see the kindergarten classrooms and meet the kindergarten teachers.

If you have a child who will be 5 years old by September 1, 2010, and have not yet enrolled for kindergarten, please call the school office at 881-9500. ***Similarly, if you are aware of families with school-age children who will be new to District 29 in the fall or are planning to move out of the District, please let us know. Accurate enrollment figures are very important as we plan for the coming school year.***



Students in Mrs. Dekin's kindergarten class channel artist Vincent Van Gogh while painting sunflowers in the style of the artist. Kindergartners study several well-known artists, reinforcing what they have learned with this hands-on activity.