



SUNSET RIDGE

School District 29 Board Newsletter

www.sunsetridge29.net

August 2009

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



Congratulations to the Class of 2009!

Fifty-nine students comprising the class of 2009 received their diplomas in an evening ceremony on Wednesday, June 9. Chief of Police Bill Lustig began the program by leading students and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance. Dr. Linda Vieth offered her congratulations to the students and their families. She also presented the students with an imaginary suitcase filled with items that would be useful as they continue their academic and lifelong pursuits. Graduates selected by their classmates to be speakers in the ceremony included: Jordan Bretthauer, Welcome; Madeline Head and Sophia Krause-Levy, Class History; Paddy Donahue and Awais Khan, Class Gift; Mary Lewis and Leah Neustadt, Farewell. The students chose as their class gift three round tables for the lunchroom. Principal Bryan Albro presented the graduates as Ms. Phoebe Raymond, President, awarded their diplomas on behalf of the Board of Education. The ceremony concluded with the 2009 class video.

Following the ceremony, guests offered congratulations to the graduates at a reception in the small gym. Students then adjourned to the cafeteria for their celebration party.



Happy graduates enjoy the recessional.



Dr. Linda Vieth

Dear Sunset Ridge Community Member,

I hope you are having a wonderful summer! Sunset Ridge continues to be a busy place, even during the weeks school is not in session. In addition to routine summer cleaning and maintenance, teachers are attending workshops and participating in committee work. Office staff and administrators are preparing for the new school year, and our technology team is working on enhancements to our tech infrastructure.

The Facilities Study Committee is also active during the summer months. The Committee and Board of Education are continuing to consider and prioritize facility needs. Public meetings to discuss the study were held on June 23rd and July 14th, and a third meeting will be held on August 18th in the Sunset Ridge Learning Center from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Parents, community members and staff are invited to attend. (Please note that the time of our regular Board of Education meeting has been changed to 7:30 p.m. that evening.) Refer to the article on page 5 for additional information about the facilities study.

Continued on page 4

Hands-on Activities Enrich Learning

Hands-on activities engage the hand and the head in learning. When experience is the teacher, learning is fun, authentic and memorable. The result? It is often retained over time as well.

Seventh grade Outdoor Education provides an intensive experience in hands-on learning. During their three-day stay at Camp Algonquin, students engage in field-based learning with Mother Nature as their classroom. Sunset Ridge and on-site faculty integrate all subject areas while teaching environmental awareness, astronomy, and the study of forest and river ecology. Teambuilding activities are another emphasis of the program, as students learn to live and work cooperatively in dormitory style accommodations. Science teacher Rick Walters directs the Outdoor Education program.

In early June third graders head westward to The Grove to spend a day experiencing the simplicity, challenges and satisfactions of pioneer life. The children and teachers dress in period garb and tote non-perishable lunches in baskets or wrapped in a bandanna on a stick. As they churn butter, dip candles to use as light, and work as blacksmiths, they also learn why some people chose the hardship and adventure of westward expansion. Although intrigued by attending class in a one-room schoolhouse, most of the children are happy to return to the comfort and conveniences of Middlefork.



Seventh graders learn about cooperation as well as nature during Outdoor Education.



Third graders go to class in a one-room schoolhouse as part of their Pioneer Day experience at The Grove.

School Improvement Days: Early Dismissal for Students Affords Needed Professional Development Time for Teachers

MAP testing, Response to Intervention (RTI), social emotional learning, technology as a teaching tool, student discipline. During the last few years, District 29 has embraced a number of best practice initiatives. "So little time, and so much to do," has been a common refrain as teachers and administrators work to develop these and other programs.

In accordance with the new teacher contract the school calendar includes four School Improvement Days which will provide large blocks of time for staff members to gather and address these and other important issues. The dates are:

- Friday, September 18
- Friday, December 18
- Wednesday, February 3
- Friday, April 30

Students will begin school at their regular time. School will dismiss before lunch as follows:

- Grades K-2 11:45 a.m.
- Grade 3 11:55 a.m.
- Grades 4-8 12:00 p.m.

**Parents are reminded to make note
of these dates.**

Awards Recognize Outstanding Student Efforts and Achievements

Academic, athletic and fine and performing arts awards were presented to District students for the 2008-2009 school year. Students honored include:

Outstanding Achievement

for scholarship, leadership and citizenship

Paddy Donahue—8th Grade
 Awais Khan—8th Grade
 Mary Lewis—8th Grade
 Danny Elfman—7th Grade
 Julie Hagen—7th Grade
 Adam Khan—7th Grade

Jim Clarkson Award

for outstanding effort

Maggie Andrews—8th Grade

Sportsmanship

for exemplary conduct on and off the field

Maggie Andrews—8th Grade
 Leah Neustadt—8th Grade
 Mick Donahue—7th Grade
 Danny Elfman—7th Grade
 Nicole Phillips—7th Grade

Lily Hines—6th Grade
 Kevin Maier—6th Grade

Outstanding Athletic Achievement

Mary Lewis—8th Grade
 Timothy Reynolds—8th Grade

Renaissance Award

Paddy Donahue—8th Grade
 Leah Neustadt—8th Grade

Band Director's Award

Paddy Donahue—8th Grade

Music Man Award

Tommy Hauldren—8th Grade

Diva Award

Jordan Bretthauer—8th Grade



Recipients of this year's awards were announced at assemblies in June. Students received individual plaques recognizing their achievements and their names will be added to cumulative plaques which are displayed in the Sunset Ridge foyer.

Congratulations to Billy Solyst Recipient of the 2009 Dr. B. Scholarship

The scholarship is awarded to a high school senior who exemplifies the qualities of academic excellence, character, and service to others that honor his or her education at Sunset Ridge School.

Board of Education Appointments 2009—2011

BOARD OFFICERS

President: Phoebe Raymond
Vice-President: Sean O'Grady

COMMITTEES

Education

Chairperson: Philip Jones
Shaun O'Leary, Debbie Papas

Finance/Facilities

Chairperson: Madonna Tideman
Sean O'Grady, Doug Warshauer

External Relations

Foundation Fund Liaison:
Madonna Tideman
IASB/Legislative Affairs Representative: Doug Warshauer
Northfield Park District/Community Center Liaison:
Debbie Papas

NSSED Liaison: Shaun O'Leary

PTO Liaison: Madonna Tideman

Village of Northfield Liaison:
Sean O'Grady

Internal Relations

Coordinator of Annual Events: Madonna Tideman
Communications Liaison:
Debbie Papas

DISTRICT COMMITTEES

Action Plan Committees

Communication: Shaun O'Leary, Phoebe Raymond
Foreign Language: Phoebe Raymond
Social Emotional Learning:
Doug Warshauer
Student Engagement:
Debbie Papas
Technology: Phoebe Raymond

Character Education:
Debbie Papas

Professional Growth:
Madonna Tideman

Wellness: Shaun O'Leary

The Board of Education welcomes and appreciates the involvement of the community. Residents are encouraged to attend School Board meetings, which regularly occur on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Sunset Ridge School Learning Center, or to contact school board members or District 29 administrators by telephone. Please refer to the District website, www.sunsetridge29.net for a complete list of regular and subcommittee meetings.

Vieth, continued from page 1

Students will discover a few changes at Middlefork and Sunset Ridge when they return to school on August 26th. In accordance with the recently negotiated contract with our teaching staff, the length of our school days will increase by twenty minutes. In addition, four School Improvement Days have been incorporated into our calendar. Students will be dismissed early on these days, providing time for the teachers to participate in professional growth or attend meetings. Student discipline, social emotional learning, and utilizing MAP assessment data are among the topics we plan to address. Our new hours are listed on page 6. Information about School Improvement Days can be found on page 2.

In addition to changes in the school day, sixth, seventh and eighth grade students will find a new exploratory program replacing the previous elective format. Social emotional learning will be incorporated

into their expanded advisory time, and many students will have a study hall built into their schedule. Junior high instrumental music lessons will be held before school, and several new before and after school activities will be offered. We are excited about these program enhancements and look forward to their implementation!

Although I hate to see the summer end, I am looking forward the 2009-2010 school year! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments about our facility study or program plans for next year.

Sincerely,
Linda J. Vieth, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Facilities Study Update

During the summer months the Facilities Study Committee has continued to review needs related to the District's two buildings. In April, BLDD Architects presented its preliminary findings and recommendations, which were based on research conducted this past winter and spring. This report led to the identification of 23 projects for consideration. In June the Committee and Board utilized the Facilities Priority Guidelines to evaluate these areas of need. According to the guidelines, facilities decisions must:

- Demonstrate the District's commitment to an outstanding academic program now and in the future
- Support the outcomes of the Strategic Plan
- Improve the quality of the student/staff learning environment
- Incorporate coherent design in planning for access, circulation, and flexibility
- Be respectful of the economic climate and maintain fiscal responsibility.

At the July 14th Special Meeting, BLDD architect Tim McGrath reviewed the 23 projects and led a

discussion with those in attendance. Mr. McGrath addressed how each project could be accomplished and presented rough schematic drawings to illustrate his ideas.

The Board of Education evaluated and prioritized these projects in accordance with the Guidelines. The top six projects include:

- Adequate number of classrooms
- Music suite at Sunset Ridge
- PE facility at Sunset Ridge
- Break out/small group areas at both Middlefork and Sunset Ridge
- Gifted and special education areas at both Middlefork and Sunset Ridge
- Large multi-purpose space at both Middlefork and Sunset Ridge

The discussion will continue on August 18th at a Special Board meeting. The meeting will take place in the Sunset Ridge Learning Center from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Parents, community members, and staff are invited to attend.

Input Prompts Changes to 6th, 7th 8th Grade Program

In response to input from the 2008 District Survey of parents, students, staff and community members, the program and structure in grades 6, 7, and 8 will undergo significant modifications in the upcoming school year.

Calling the rationale for the changes a "stimulus package," Sunset Ridge School principal Bryan Albro identified as needs:

- Time for required classes
- Time for Study Hall
- Time for Instrumental Music
- Time for other pull-out classes
- Reduction in pull-outs from academic classes

- Study skills instruction for all 6th grade students early in the year

- Improved balance of Fine Arts in grades 7 and 8

- Reduced academic stress

Previously the school day has included no study halls or designated pull-out times.

In sixth grade the new program provides a minimum of two study halls per week for all students. Study skills will be taught during these times beginning in the fall. Students will study art, music and health in a trimester rotation of classes.

In grades 7 and 8 students will participate in instrumental music or study hall two days per

week and rotate through a quarter-long sequence of exploratory classes three days per week. Among the exploratory topics in seventh grade are art, music, and speech and drama. Art, music, constitution and health comprise exploratories in eighth grade. Instrumental music lessons and sectionals will meet weekly before school.

"The new program addresses all of the needs identified in the stimulus package," Mr. Albro noted. "Although we are eliminating elective classes, we are planning additional interest-based clubs before and after school in which student can elect to participate."

Field Days Are a Year-End Favorite

A cool and overcast afternoon failed to dampen the children’s spirits on Middlefork Field Day—one of the most beloved year-end traditions at the school. Following two postponements due to inclement weather, physical education teacher Donna Kasper and her crew of parent volunteers made sure the day was worth the wait. Everyone was a winner during a water-filled afternoon of games, relay races and old-fashioned fun. “Field Day is an exercise in fitness, skill, and agility,” Mrs. Kasper explained, “More important, it is about cooperation and having a good time.”

At Sunset Ridge, fourth and fifth graders competed as various Chicago sports teams on their Field Day. Seventh graders in the service learning class supervised the various activities, including an egg toss, obstacle course, and basketball. As at Middlefork, competition was kept to a minimum, with the emphasis on team spirit instead. “When the games are over we all gather for popsicles and to celebrate the afternoon,” explained fourth grade teacher Robin Zogby, who coordinated the event.

At right: Middlefork (top) and Grades 4-5 (bottom) Field Days.



School Days, School Days

School resumes for the 2009-10 school year with a morning session on Wednesday, August 26. The schedule for the day is:

Kindergarten:	8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Grades 1-3	8:30 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.
Grades 4-5	8:40 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Grades 6-8	8:27 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

On Thursday, August 28, students will attend a full day of school. *Please note the new school hours:*

Kindergarten:	8:30 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. (full extended day*)
Grades 1-2	8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Grade 3	8:30 a.m. to 3:10 p.m.
Grades 4-5	8:40 a.m. to 3:20 p.m.
Grades 6-8	8:24 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

*Kindergarten will dismiss at 11:50 a.m. through September 25 and extend until 12:50 p.m. from September 28 through October 23. Beginning October 26, dismissal will be at 1:50 p.m.. First grade will dismiss at 1:50 p.m. on August 27-28 and will extend to the regular dismissal time of 3:00 p.m. thereafter.

School Calendar 2009—2010

AUGUST	21 24-25 26 27	NEW TEACHER INSTITUTE - NO SCHOOL TEACHER INSTITUTE - NO SCHOOL School opens - Morning session only First full day of school and 4th and 5th grade Open House
SEPTEMBER	3 7 10 18 28	6th, 7th, and 8th grade Open House LABOR DAY - NO SCHOOL Middlefork Open House SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DAY-EARLY DISMISSAL YOM KIPPUR - NO SCHOOL
OCTOBER	9 12 30	TEACHER INSTITUTE - NO SCHOOL COLUMBUS DAY - NO SCHOOL End of first quarter
NOVEMBER	23-24 25-26-27	PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES - NO SCHOOL THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO SCHOOL
DECEMBER	18 12/19/09-1/3/10	SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DAY-EARLY DISMISSAL WINTER BREAK - NO SCHOOL
JANUARY	4 18 22	Classes resume MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY - NO SCHOOL End of second quarter
FEBRUARY	3 12 15	SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DAY-EARLY DISMISSAL PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES - NO SCHOOL PRESIDENTS' DAY - NO SCHOOL
MARCH	25 26 3/27/10-4/4/10	End of third quarter TEACHER INSTITUTE - NO SCHOOL SPRING BREAK - NO SCHOOL
APRIL	5 30	Classes resume SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DAY-EARLY DISMISSAL
MAY	31	MEMORIAL DAY - NO SCHOOL
JUNE	2 4	Eighth Grade Graduation *Last day of school - Early dismissal End of fourth quarter

* If emergency days are used, the calendar will be extended.

REV. 6-11-09



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446-0838

District 29 Administrators

Linda J. Vieth, Ed.D., Superintendent,
881-9456

Mary Frances Greene, Ed.D., Middlefork
Principal, Associate Superintendent, 881-9505

Edward Stange, Ph.D., Director of Student
Services, Assistant Superintendent, 881-9453

Terrie Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of
Business and Finance, 881-9457

Bryan Albro, Sunset Ridge Principal, 881-9459

Marti von Kluck
Editor

District 29 website
www.sunsetridge29.net

DISTRICT
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*The faculty and students
at Middlefork
and Sunset Ridge Schools
extend a heartfelt
thank-you to our parent
and community volunteers
for the many ways you
contribute to our schools.
Whether in the classrooms,
lunchrooms, or libraries,
helping with projects,
sharing a special talent,
participating in the PTO
or on a committee, we
value all you do on behalf
of our schools.*



“Every Day is Earth Day” was the theme of the Middlefork Spring Sing. Students demonstrated their musical talents as they sang *The Green Blues*, *Recycle Rap*, *Plant a Tree* and more. The program concluded with third graders performing *The States and Capitals* and an audience of proud families and friends joining the performers in the *Middlefork School Song*. Mrs. Shawna Sabransky, music teacher, directed the program.