

School District 29

BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT

Middlefork School
405 Wagner Road
847/881-9500

School District 29
Northfield, Illinois 60093
www.sunsetridge29.net

Sunset Ridge School
525 Sunset Ridge Road
847/881-9400

October 2007

Dear Sunset Ridge Parents and Community Members,



Dr. Linda Vieth

We have now completed several weeks of school and are in the midst of the beautiful fall season. Our students and teachers have settled into their routines, and traditional fall activities, including fall sports, Student Council events, and Social Dancing have begun.

It is now time to start addressing some of the goals that we have set forth for this school year. I'd like to briefly share my thoughts regarding one of these goals that involves all of you—our District Survey.

As you may know, we will be conducting a District Survey this year. The survey will cover all aspects of our District, including facilities, finances, curriculum, programs, and communication. All Sunset Ridge stakeholders, including staff, parents, and community members, as well as some current and former students will be given an opportunity to provide input. Our Survey Committee, which consists of parents, staff, and community members, is in the process of developing the survey. Our goal is to create an electronic survey that can be completed on line by our stakeholders this February. Paper copies will also be made available for those who prefer that format. Information about electronic survey procedures or how to obtain a paper copy will be provided in the coming weeks. We encourage you, whether you have children in our schools or not, to participate in the survey process—your opinion matters to us! Data from the survey will be analyzed and form the basis for next year's strategic planning. Survey results will also be shared at a future Board of Education meeting.

The survey is just one of many topics our Board of Education will address this year. The Board, which consists of seven members, spends countless hours

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District Enrollment Report

Beginning-of-the-year enrollment figures reflect a modest increase over last year's student census. The total student body of 509 is consistent with projections, which had indicated a leveling off from the declining enrollment of the last four years. As in recent years, the District is tracking close to demographer John Kassarda's "B" series projections, which reflect a middle range of anticipated enrollment.

Middlefork's student population increased to 213 from 211 in 2006-07. This year's kindergarten class of 46 and first grade class of 56 are each taught in three sections. The second grade gained six students bringing the total to 44, who remain in two sections. Third grade, with 67 students, continues in four sections.

Enrollment at Sunset Ridge School is consistent with last year's figure of 296. Fourth through eighth grades are housed in three sections each, with class sizes of 54, 71, 56, 58, and 57 respectively. Ten District 29 students are taught in specialized settings, including three children in early intervention programs..

A staff of 56 certified teachers and 25 teacher associates is in place to assure the quality of academic and

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Third graders in Mrs. Styczen's class piece together a "getting acquainted" puzzle on the first day of school.

District Welcomes New Faculty Members

Barbara Conley-Benjamin (7th-8th Grade Science) pursued a successful career as a chemist and marketing executive for pharmaceuticals before deciding to share her love of science as an educator. Most recently, she taught 8th grade science at Palombi Middle School in Lake Villa. Mrs. Benjamin earned a Bachelor of Science in environmental biology from Eastern Illinois University and a Master of Arts in elementary education from National-Louis University. She enjoys tennis, travel, and spending time with her family.

Brittany Borucki (Speech-Language Pathologist) was awarded a Master of Science in communication sciences and disorders from Western Illinois University in May. She earned her Bachelor's degree in speech-language pathology from Illinois State University. Ms. Borucki did her practicum experiences in hospital and school settings and enjoys tennis and ballet.

Emily Dunham (School Psychologist) came to District 29 from the Heartland Area Education Agency 11 in Iowa. A graduate of Miami University in Ohio, she spent four years in the business sector prior to pursuing a Master's degree in School Psychology at National-Louis University. Ms. Dunham completed her internship at ACS Hillingdon International School in England. She enjoys swimming, kayaking and walking to raise funds for health-related organizations.

Charlene Entman (Technology Teacher Facilitator). District 29 was fortunate to attract Mrs. Entman from New Trier, where she spent nine years in various capacities within the technology department, including web design and pioneering e-Learning initiatives. Mrs. Entman received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois and a Master's degree in instructional technology from Northern Illinois University.

She has served as an advocate and presenter on Internet Safety and Social Technology and looks forward to assisting staff and students integrate technology into everyday learning.

Sheran Fiedler (Middlefork Music) came to Middlefork highly recommended by faculty who knew her during her 19 year tenure in the Glencoe schools. In addition to her public school career, Dr. Fiedler is an instructor at the college level, teaching courses in music, music education and the Orff Schulwerk method. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in music from Western Washington State College and her Master's and Doctorate degrees from Northwestern.

Trevor Hope (5th Grade) spent his first year at Sunset Ridge as a teacher associate of

technology. He impressed students, teachers and administrators with his knowledge, willingness to get involved in all aspects of the school, and sense of humor. Mr. Hope received his Bachelor's degree from



Top photo (l.-r.): Trevor Hope, Regina Ruggie, Brittany Borucki, Barbara Conley-Benjamin, Emily Dunham, Charlene Entman.
Bottom photo (l.-r.): Robin Nagy, Sheran Fiedler, Kathleen Sawyer.

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Columbia College and his Master of Arts in Teaching from National-Louis University. A former computer technician at Best Buy, he stays current with technology as a web site consultant.

Robin Nagy (Middlefork Art) has worked in the classroom for nine years, most recently at Lincoln Elementary School in Bellwood and Kaleidoscope School of Fine Art in Barrington. She earned her Bachelor's degree in elementary education from Roosevelt University. A new mom, she enjoys spending time with her family and volunteer service.

Regina Ruggie (6th Grade Language Arts) became an integral member of the sixth grade team as a teacher associate last year. Her passion for teaching and respect for all students made her a natural choice for a full-time position. Mrs. Ruggie previously taught language arts at Sacred Heart School in Winnetka. The mother of four, she attended college while raising her children and received her Bachelor of Arts from Barat College. Mrs. Ruggie is an avid gardener and shares her love of reading with friends through book clubs.

Kathleen Sawyer (1st Grade) taught kindergarten at Our Lady of Perpetual Help before joining the Middlefork staff. She has also served as a reading support specialist and instructional aide and as assistant manager of the Old Willow Club. Mrs. Sawyer earned a Bachelor's degree in elementary education from Trinity International University. Athletics and family fill her time when not teaching.



Second graders enjoy playing together at recess on the first day of classes.

TEACHER ASSOCIATES ENHANCE LEARNING

DISTRICT 29 IS VERY FORTUNATE TO HAVE HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHER ASSOCIATES SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOMS AND RESOURCE ROOMS.

ALL DISTRICT 29 ASSOCIATES ARE CERTIFIED TEACHERS OR CURRENTLY PURSUING GRADUATE DEGREES IN EDUCATION. TWELVE ARE RETURNING ASSOCIATES; SEVERAL HAVE BEEN IN THE DISTRICT FIVE OR MORE YEARS.

**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION EXTENDS
ITS DEEP APPRECIATION TO THIS
DEDICATED GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS.**

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co-curricular programs.

Dr. Vieth has analyzed enrollment statistics for the last ten years in a variety of ways, including anticipated increases in enrollment at each grade level. She is closely monitoring two grade levels for potential increases that possibly could warrant additional sections and restructuring of room usage.

Twenty new families joined the District this year, adding students to all grade levels. Please welcome the Allen, Bianco, Bick, Crandell, Dutra, Dyra, Fisk, Gallagher, Green, Jacobs, Khan, Klapperich, Kotaba, Metropoulos, Minogue, Morris, Sanz, Savich, Tolan, and Truong families when you see them at school and in the community.

Get to Know the Newest Members of the School Board

We are pleased to introduce three members of the school board, who were elected in April 2007.

Philip Jones has lived in Northfield for seven years. He has three sons, who are in third and first grades at Middlefork and preschool, respectively. An intellectual property attorney, Mr. Jones has always loved learning. He shared this enthusiasm through teaching at a private high school after graduating from college. "I was attracted to serving on the school board as an opportunity to participate in the educational institutions that my children attend," Mr. Jones stated. "I bring to the board my interest and excitement towards learning as well as the perspective I gained while teaching." Commending the great schools and impressive faculty and administration in District 29, Mr. Jones noted important issues facing the

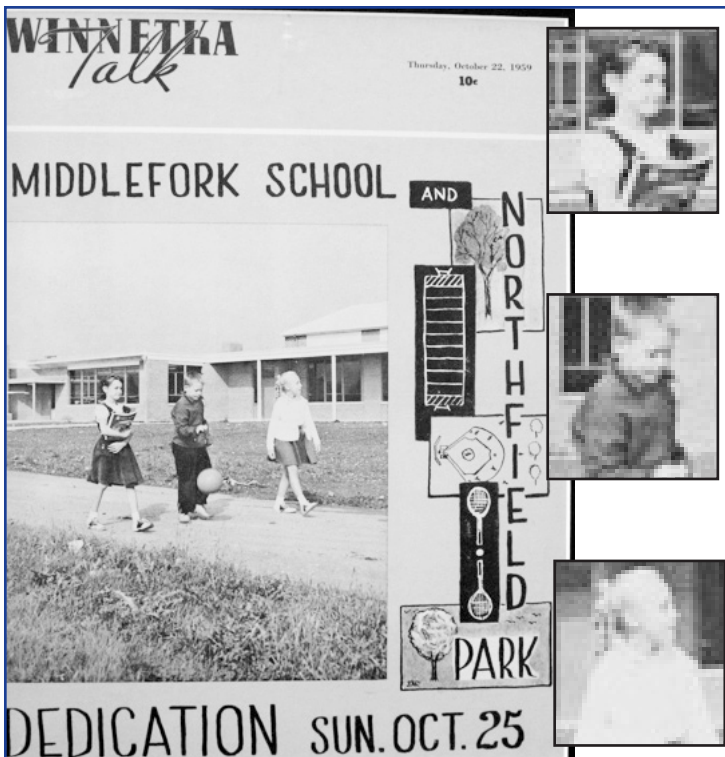
District, including the future of Willow Road, negotiation of the next teacher contract, and integration of technology into the classroom. "I appreciate the opportunity to serve on the school board and will do my best to continue the positive legacy left by prior members," he affirmed.

Sean O'Grady wanted to become more involved in the community. The father of four children, ages 8, 6, 4, and 2, he decided a "Middlefork perspective" as well as expertise in organizational operations and finance would make serving on the Board of Education a good fit. Mr. O'Grady has a Master's degree in hospital and health administration and is a vice-president of Evanston-Northwestern Healthcare. "I work with boards as an administrator and understand how complex human service organizations work," he stated. Mr.

O'Grady identified supporting the transition to a new superintendent, safety concerns with Willow Road and actualizing the District technology plan as priorities. He encourages community residents to contact school board members and share their priorities and concerns. "In many ways, the schools are the center of Northfield," he noted. This is one of the joys of being in a small town. We all have a vested interest in our schools."

Phoebe Raymond has lived in Northfield for 19 years. She has a daughter who is a Sunset Ridge alumna and senior at New Trier and a son in fourth grade. An active volunteer from preschool through New Trier, she has "worked with many dedicated teachers and administrators and was motivated by the opportunity to help them do what they do best," she explained.

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DO YOU KNOW WHO THESE CHILDREN ARE?

THIS COVER APPEARED ON THE "WINNETKA TALK" ON OCTOBER 22, 1959. IT WAS DISCOVERED WHEN DR. BULTINCK WENT THROUGH THE ARCHIVES UPON HIS RETIREMENT. THE COVER HAS BEEN FRAMED AND IS NOW HANGING IN THE OFFICE OF MIDDLEFORK PRINCIPAL DR. MARY FRANCES GREENE.

IF YOU RECOGNIZE ANY OF THE CHILDREN IN THE PHOTOGRAPH (INSETS AT RIGHT), PLEASE CONTACT THE MIDDLEFORK SCHOOL OFFICE AT 847-881-9500. MIDDLEFORK HISTORIANS WOULD LOVE TO KNOW WHO THEY ARE.

2006-07 ISAT Scores Reflect Outstanding Achievement

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) measures individual student achievement relative to the Illinois Learning Standards. The results give parents, teachers, and schools one measure of student learning and school performance.

The 2006-2007 ISAT assessed students in the areas of reading and math (grades 3 through 8), science (grades 4 and 7 only), and written language (grades 5 and 8 only). All students in the District in grades 3 through 8, including those with disabilities, are required to take the annual ISAT tests.

The 2006-2007 testing results for Sunset Ridge School District 29 were consistent with the high achievement typically associated with the District. Across most grade levels and subject areas, at least 90% of District 29 students meet or exceed state standards.

A controversial area of assessment this past year was the new 5th grade written language test. Results for school districts across the state were significantly lower than expected, and consequently, some districts appealed to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to re-score their 5th grade writing assessments. Only 67% of 5th grade students in District 29 met state standards on this test, consistent with the results across the other New Trier sender districts. Given the plethora of complaints about the results, ISBE ultimately encouraged districts to consider this past year's data as a "baseline."

Interested individuals can learn more specific information about the District's 2006-2007 ISAT performance by contacting Dr. Edward Stange, Director of Student Services.

**The District 29 2007 School Report Card can be viewed on our website:
www.sunsetridge29.net**

School Buildings Maintained During Summer

While District families relaxed during summer break, Facilities Manager Mike Arnold and his staff were hard at work with building maintenance projects. Major work included:

Middlefork School

- Demolition and replacement of ceilings and lights in 70% of the classrooms and smaller rooms using energy efficient lighting.
- Improvements in the third section, including removal and replacement of all exterior windows, abatement of asbestos floor tiles and replacement with new vinyl composite tiles, replacement of all sinks/cabinets, and replacement of mini-blinds.
- Replacement of the small gym lights with fluorescent fixtures.
- Adding wiring into classrooms with dedicated circuits to service the increased numbers of computers and/or laptop carts, and for the

projectors installed into most classrooms.

Sunset Ridge School

- Demolition, removal, and installation of new lockers on the upper level and north end of the lower level of the school.
- Replacement of old lights in the small gym with energy efficient fluorescent lighting.
- Adding wiring into classrooms with dedicated circuits for laptop carts and for the projectors installed into the majority of classrooms.
- Retrofit one room into two smaller rooms for office and a conference room usage.

The School Board thanks Mr. Arnold and the entire custodial staff for all their work in getting the buildings and playground areas updated, sparkling clean, and ready for the first day of school.

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"This is a unique opportunity to serve multiple constituencies where the student is the common denominator." Mrs. Raymond holds an MBA in Finance and spent 12 years in brand management at Kraft. Her business background and commitment to the whole child are strengths she brings to the school board. Mrs. Raymond shares the priorities mentioned by Mr. O'Grady and Mr. Jones, noting that the board will be soliciting community feedback in preparation for strategic planning. Another area of interest is finding ways to "decompress" students while maintaining academic excellence. "This is a good dialogue for all of us, and it is always on my mind," she stated.

Madonna Tideman was also elected for a second term in April. Peter Fischer, Marti Bennett and Gordon Scott were elected to the Board of Education in 2005.

New Communication Vehicles Being Implemented and Explored

During the recent head lice outbreak we found that our means of communicating with parents as a group was limited to sending letters home in the backpacks of students or through the mail. Efficient and prompt communication has been a goal of ours, and prior to the lice outbreak we had already begun exploring ways of communicating with parents in a more efficient and timely fashion. The first two communication tools listed below are immediately available, and the two other means will be implemented in the near future.

SRS Hot Line

We have established a new hot line for District parents. Call our new outgoing message center at 881-9HOT (881-9468) for “hot off the press” school information or special announcements. You can also access the hot line by calling our main number (881-9400) and pressing extension 7. We will post information such as the cancellation of after school sports, field trip changes or delays, weather-related information, and other special circumstances. This will not be used for routine daily announcements.

School News on the Web Page

Although our webpage will be changing in the

coming months, we plan to make greater use of our current webpage. Click on the MF News or SRS News links on the home page. These links take you directly to “news” pages, where we will post parent letters, announcements and updates. The date of the newest posting will be noted on the link so you can tell at a glance if the news has been updated since you last visited the site.

Automated Phone Notification System

We are presently comparing the costs and features of different notification systems. We will make a selection and bring our recommendation to the Board of Education at the November meeting.

Parent Group Emails

With the assistance of the PTO we are in the process of preparing group lists with all parents by district-wide, school, grade, and class. This will enable us to target emails to specific groups of parents.

It is our hope that these tools will enable us to communicate with parents in a timely and efficient manner. Please let us know how these measures are working and how we can continually improve our communication with school families.

Math Text Offers Web-Based Supports

A new, updated algebra and pre-algebra textbook series by McDougall-Littell was chosen by the math curriculum committee this summer. Among the benefits of this program is a multi-faceted Internet-based component, including a complete online textbook, at-home tutorial that can teach lessons to students who are absent from class, section quizzes and interactive e-workbook and practice tests. Students receive immediate feedback as they solve homework and practice problems, so they can determine topics that require clarification or additional review and practice. Animated computer games maintain interest as they reinforce learning.



Math students use laptops and a web-based text to study at school, so heavy textbooks can be kept at home.

Students use individual laptop computers at school to access the online text and can highlight and notate the lessons. These notations can be accessed when students work from home.

If you would like to view the Course 2 and 3 programs used at Sunset Ridge, log into www.classzone.com.

VIETH, continued from page 1 representing you at Board Meetings and on various committees. Board members Marti Bennett, Peter Fischer, Philip Jones, Sean O’Grady, Phoebe Raymond, Gordon Scott, and Madonna Tideman give generously of their own time, providing a valuable service to the District and our community. We invite you to attend our meetings or view minutes from past meetings. Meeting schedules and minutes can be found on our web page at www.sunsetridge29.net.

This brings me to another goal that we are about to undertake—the development and design of a new and improved District web page. I will share more information about this goal as our work progresses during the coming months. Your comments and suggestions about the web page as we begin to make changes are welcomed!

Finally, I want to take a

moment to thank our Sunset Ridge parents for their tremendous support. It is very apparent that the strong partnership we have with our parents, both individually and collectively as the PTO, contributes greatly to the success of our students and our District. I would also like to thank and acknowledge our community members who do not currently have children attending our schools. You represent approximately two thirds of our population. We appreciate your support and we look forward to hearing from you during our survey process.

Please feel free to contact me if you have a question or concern or wish to learn more about our schools.

Sincerely,

Linda Vieth, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

District Integrates Technology Into Daily Learning

District 29 is continuing to implement its comprehensive technology plan with several new initiatives, including:

- Phase two of the one-to-one laptop program. A total of nine classroom laptop carts in grades three through eight allow each student in the classroom to work at a computer during lessons.
- Installation of a projector connected to the teacher’s computer in each classroom for audio-visual instructional support.
- Promethean Board pilot project. These interactive whiteboards are being piloted in various classrooms across grade levels and subject areas.
- Utilization of an Internet-supported math text in seventh and eighth grades, including an online textbook, interactive workbook, and problems and games for additional practice. Students can access these supports from home and school.
- Hiring of a Teacher Technology Facilitator. This new position dedicates one full-time staff position as a “teacher of teachers” to maximize faculty members’ knowledge and skills integrating technology resources into daily teaching and learning.

A Heartfelt Thank You to Chief Lustig and the Northfield Police Department.

Arriving at Middlefork well before the first students and staying until everyone was safely in the building, Chief Lustig and officers assured the safety of all during the first week of school while construction restricted Wagner Road to one way. They not only directed traffic during arrival and dismissal times, but made certain the sidewalk was swept clean so the children would not get dirty. “Chief Lustig took on so much of the weight of worrying about the children coming and going,” Middlefork Principal Mary Frances Greene stated. Students signed and presented a banner to the Police Department: ***“Thank you for keeping us safe. We love Middlefork and you!”***



Seventh graders practice bus safety evacuations during the first week of school.

A Discussion of the District 29 Bullying Survey
Presented by: Dr. Edward Stange
Tuesday, November 6
7:00 p.m.
Sunset Ridge Learning Center

The community is invited to hear a discussion of the bullying survey taken last spring by District 29 students in third through eighth grades. The survey examined students' perceptions regarding:

- frequency of bullying behaviors in the school and community environments
- types of bullying that occur
- locations of bullying
- effectiveness of the faculty, administration and fellow students' proactive and reactive responses to incidents of bullying
- most effective ways to prevent and respond to bullying.

The survey was developed and administered by District 29 in conjunction with the Character Education Parent Committee. An average of 96% of students in grades three through eight completed the questionnaire. The information gathered from the survey will assist the District in program and policy review and development.

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Edward Stange, Ph.D., Director of Student
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Marti von Kluck
Editor

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