



SUNSET RIDGE

School District 29 Board Newsletter

www.sunsetridge29.net

January 2009

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



Dr. Linda Vieth

Dear District 29 Community Members,

Greetings from Sunset Ridge School District 29! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year! May 2009 bring you and your family peace, good health and happiness.

The year has flown by quickly, and much has been accomplished in District 29 during the past 12 months! Last year at this time we were busy putting the finishing touches on our community-wide District survey. Since that time, our Strategic Planning Team met, developed a new mission statement and beliefs, and established several goals. Data from our survey formed the basis for many of our goals and subsequent action plans. I'd like to provide you with a progress report regarding several of our action plan committees.

- The **Band Action Plan Committee** is currently studying data from the parent and student surveys. It has also gathered information from instrumental music programs in other schools. The committee plans to generate recommendations during the next few months and will present them to the Board's Education Committee on April 21, 2009.
- The **Technology Committee** is preparing for the next phase of our one to one laptop initiative: sending laptops home with our 8th grade students. This exciting step will provide students with increased opportunities to utilize technology and access varied resources while at home. Laptops will be sent home with 7th graders following the successful implementation of the 8th grade program. Parent and student meetings were held earlier this month to discuss proper care and handling of the laptops as well as shared responsibility expectations.
- The **Facilities Committee** has recommended the hiring of BLDD Architects to conduct a comprehensive

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Facilities Study Will Identify Optimal Use of Buildings

Goal is to create facilities plan that supports and enhances curriculum

The Board of Education has retained BLDD Architects to work with the District Facilities Committee. The architects will evaluate Sunset Ridge and Middlefork Schools relative to current and future maintenance needs and optimal use of space to augment curriculum and teaching practices. Their report will include a menu of options that support the outcomes of the Strategic Planning Action Committees.

"The goal of the study is to more wisely use our facilities to support the educational programs," explained Terrie Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance. "Our intention is to remain within the existing footprint of the buildings. But as we begin to anticipate facilities modifications, we need a documented review of what we currently have and what we might do to better support the objectives and outcomes of the Strategic Plan."

The Board decided last fall that it would be prudent to create a comprehensive facilities plan prior to considering any major building projects. The

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The new 4th-6th grade Spanish classroom is in space formerly dedicated to a computer lab.

Middlefork Service Night Teaches Joy of Giving

More than 175 students and parents participated in Middlefork Service Night on November 7. Together they prepared 150 sack lunches for Hilda's Place in Evanston, 100 school kits for homeless children attending the Chicago Public Schools, dozens of quilt squares to be made into blankets for children in hospitals or shelters by Project Linus, and holiday cards for servicemen in Veterans Hospitals.

The Character Education Parent Committee, which sponsors the Service Night, wishes to thank Dominick's Finer Foods and Trader Joe's for their generous donations, Sunset Ridge student volunteers, and the many families who donated food items and/or shared an evening of service to others.

"Service Night is a wonderful opportunity for families to spend time together," noted committee member Lynn Hawley. "Everyone has a good time as parents model and children experience the gratification that comes from helping others. When the children see



Participants at Middlefork Service Night gathered supplies into school kits for children in need attending the Chicago Public Schools.

how much can be accomplished in the space of an hour, they go home knowing that their efforts really do make a difference."

Did You Know...

Sunset Ridge District 29 Weather Station

WeatherBug Your Weather Just Got Better™

Current Conditions

Current Conditions From AWS WeatherNet Weather Station at Sunset Ridge School in Northfield, IL

| 1/13/08 - 1:32:04 PM | CURRENT | MIN/MAX | HODURLY CHANGE |
|----------------------|----------|---------------|----------------|
| Temperature(°F) | 2.1 | -14.8 / 5.6 | 2.8 ↓ |
| Humidity (%) | 57.5 | 52.3 / 91.9 | 4.4 ↓ |
| Wind (mph) | WSW 6.8 | NW 17.5 | |
| Daily Rain (") | 0.00 | No Rain Today | 0.00 |
| Pressure("Hg) | 30.55 | 30.59 / 30.66 | 0.02 ↓ |
| WIND CHILL: | -10.3 °F | MONTHLY RAIN: | 0.09 " |
| | | DEW POINT: | -9.8 °F |

Real-Time Java | Metric | Full Observation | Forecast | Camera Page

Weather content on this page is for general and educational use only. Commercial use is strictly prohibited without express written consent. ©AWS, 1998-2002

Mr. Albrow with Today's Weather

There is no need to wait for the weather report on television to learn about local conditions. The most current and accurate weather information for Northfield can be obtained at any time on the Sunset Ridge website, www.sunsetridge29.net.

Equipment mounted on the roof of Sunset Ridge School continually records the temperature, wind, humidity, rain and barometric pressure as well as hourly changes. The site also includes the wind chill, daily forecast and a webcam view of Willow Road.

The primary purpose of the monitoring equipment is to support the weather science curriculum. The PTO recently approved a ways and means proposal for a weather science package that includes an interactive online curriculum with access to real-world data and a high definition (HD) outdoor weather camera. In addition to instructional use, camera images will likely be featured on WGN-TV.

To access weather information from the District 29 home page, go to "Our District" and scroll down to "Weather Station."



Save the Date:

March 6-7

Spring Greening e-waste and bicycle recycling event
Middlefork School drivethrough
Look for details on the District website.

March 11, 7:00 p.m.
PTO evening meeting and presentation on Internet Safety by Charlene Entman
District 29 Technology Teacher Facilitator



Winter Concerts Herald the Holiday Season

Wonderful music fills the halls of Middlefork and Sunset Ridge each December! The Middlefork Winter Sings and Sunset Ridge Holiday Concert, beloved traditions among parents and students alike, are a festive way for the children to share what they are learning. The Sunset Ridge School musical, “Wonka,” served as a lively prelude in mid-November.

More than 100 students were involved on stage and behind the scenes during the six performances of “Wonka.” Organization is of the essence, as different students appear in leading roles for each show. “Students who want major parts are given the opportunity to perform them,” explained play director and music teacher Carol Broos. “Everyone, including the stage crew, is in front of the lights for the finale. For some children, the play is truly a transforming experience.”

Middlefork students performed songs of the season under the direction of music teacher Shawna Sabransky. The children’s love of singing was evident in their enthusiastic and accomplished renditions of new and traditional favorites. In what has become an annual tradition, third graders sang “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” complete with gestures representing each day’s gift. Kindergartners performed their own concert of wintery wonders just before a snowstorm closed schools a day early before winter break.

The Sunset Ridge Holiday Concert included seasonal compositions performed by the fourth grade singers under the direction of Mrs. Carol Broos. The instrumental part of the program showcased the fifth grade and junior high bands performing holiday favorites under the direction of Mr. Don Golden. Highlights included “Carol of the Bells” arranged by seventh grader Derek Hawley and selections from “The Nutcracker Suite” performed by the fifth grade trio.

Top to bottom: “Wonka” (photo by Lois Bernstein), Middlefork Winter Sing, Sunset Ridge Holiday Concert.



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facilities study. The study is intended to provide a detailed analysis of our facilities, scrutinizing the efficiency of our current buildings, their ability to support our enrollment and instructional programs, and their capability to address our District's future needs. (More information on the Facilities Study can be found on page 1.)

- The **Foreign Language Action Plan Committee** begins meeting this month. The group will focus on researching best practices in foreign language instruction and options for program design and language offerings.
- The **Student Engagement Action Plan Committee** has been researching and discussing motivational theories. This month members will participate in a Web Seminar entitled *Research-Based Strategies to Engage Students in the Classroom*. The committee will also begin planning student focus groups designed to better understand what makes one lesson, unit, or curriculum more engaging than another.
- The **Communications Action Plan Committee** continues to collect data on the value and effectiveness of the many components of the District's reporting system. Recent survey feedback from parent-teacher conferences was discussed and plans for more in-depth parent focus groups are being developed.
- The **Workload Action Plan Committee** is in the research stage. Committee members are analyzing current articles about homework and looking for exam-

ples of "best practice." They are examining questions about the type, amount and usefulness of homework.

- **The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Committee** continues to work on the implementation and utilization of this new tool for evaluating the academic growth of students and designing effective instructional programs. An all-staff institute day was held on November 7, 2008 for staff to learn how to access student data and begin utilizing it to design more effective instructional programs. The committee is currently planning the spring MAP assessment sessions, which will provide the second critical data point to see how students have grown since the fall.

2009 promises to be busy and full of exciting enhancements to our schools and educational program. As we work on these initiatives, please know that our students remain "at the heart of every decision."

I thank you for your continued support and look forward to working with you and our students throughout 2009!

Sincerely,

Dr. Linda J. Vieth

Superintendent of Schools

School Board Honors Achievement

The School Board has begun a tradition of honoring members of the school community at their regular board meetings. Those honored so far this year include:

Carol Broos, Sunset Ridge music teacher, Golden Apple Award

Henry Bacon and Frank O'Meara, 7th grade, 2008 Digital Achievement Award

Chris Bell, Northfield Police Officer, 25 years of service.



The holidays were brighter for several families in need thanks to the holiday gifts, food and gift cards donated by Sunset Ridge families. Each classroom was assigned a family for whom to purchase items. Student Council members delivered dozens of boxes to the Northwestern Settlement House, which distributed the items. The Holiday Project is sponsored by the PTO.

Cake-Making Activity Engages Students

How would you make a triangular cake in four flavors, each one a different shape and a different cost, for the least amount of money? Oh, and you must include at least two pieces of each flavor. This is the challenge posed by fifth grade teacher Heather Johnson to enhance students' geometry and problem-solving skills. The cakes were described as a specialty of the Tri-Cities Bakery.



One student presented her design solution with a real cake.

“By arranging the shapes to meet the Bakery guidelines, the students learned to understand and compare the relationships of the different polygons.” Mrs. Johnson explained. “They used critical thinking and problem solving skills, rearranging geometric manipulatives to find a solution that would make the least expensive cake.”

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plan would identify priorities and a timetable for implementation. “We want to be thoughtful and proactive,” Superintendent Linda Vieth commented.

As educational practices and curriculum have changed, so have the ways in which space is utilized. For example, District guidelines call for smaller class size than previously existed, and students are frequently engaged in small group centers or activities rather than whole class instruction. It is not unusual to find students working in small groups in a hallway or foyer, where it is quieter than the classroom. Redesigned rooms might have smaller whole class areas with adjacent breakout spaces.

The ways in which computers are used has also changed significantly in recent years. Computer labs were created when technology was primarily used for research or projects, and classes could be assigned discrete times for these activities. The one-to-one laptop initiative implemented this year supports a comprehensive, integrated use of technology for activities such as interactive assignments, individualized

spelling lists that students record and practice, and research or writing assignments that can be worked on throughout the day. Although the North and South computer labs at Sunset Ridge were reconfigured into classroom and office space this year, the ways in which technology is and might be used in the future to enhance education could suggest further facilities options.

The District adheres to a facilities plan that is updated annually. “Although we do extensive upkeep each year to maintain the buildings in good operating condition, they are aging,” Mrs. Simmons stated. “It is important to identify and address future needs so that our planning in this area is coordinated with any redesign projects.”

The Facilities Committee will meet with representatives of other ongoing Action Plan Committees in the spring to determine whether and how the outcomes of those committees impact facilities planning. The architects and Committee will report their findings and options to the Board of Education later in the spring.

ATTENTION 2005 SUNSET RIDGE GRADUATES

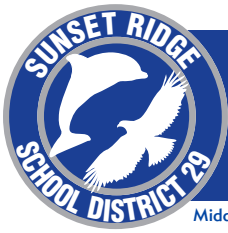
Applications for the
DR. B. SCHOLARSHIP
are now available.

If you are a 2005 graduate of SRS, will matriculate from any high school in 2009, and plan to attend college in the future, you are eligible to apply.

A \$1500 scholarship will be awarded for use towards college expenses.

Applications have been mailed to 2005 graduates for whom addresses are known and are available in the SRS Office.

Applications must be returned by March 15, 2009.



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Marti von Kluck
Editor

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- Bryan Albro, Sunset Ridge Principal, 881-9459

DISTRICT
29

PTO Approves All Ways and Means Requests

At its December meeting the PTO approved funding for all the proposals submitted by teachers, parents and a student. "All of the submissions were great," noted Tracey Buchman, Ways and Means Co-Chair. "It was such a joy to give the good news that everything had passed. We are fortunate to be a part of a district with so many caring and dedicated teachers." The approved requests include:

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| • Author Fee for Katherine Hannigan | \$ 250.00 |
| • Traditional Manuscript Die Cuts and Storage Racks | \$ 1,091.80 |
| • Character Education Books for Third Grade | \$ 696.50 |
| • 45 Field Hockey Uniforms | \$ 2,160.00 |
| • Fifth Grade Newspaper Club | \$ 1,600.00 |
| • 8 Lego/Early Simple Machines Set III | \$ 839.58 |
| • Environmentally Friendly Disposable Party Ware | \$ 813.99 |
| • Reusable Vinyl Tablecloths | \$ 1,017.89 |
| • 1 Audiometer | \$ 817.00 |
| • 2 Mobilease Emergency Response Kit | \$ 884.90 |
| • 40 Digital Cameras | \$ 3,998.00 |
| • 23 ELMO Document Cameras | \$14,237.00 |
| • Weather Science Curriculum and HD Camera Package | \$ 7,735.00 |
| • Thermo-Lite Dolphin Mascot Costume | \$ 900.00 |
| • 6 iPod Nanos and 7 Belkin TuneTalk Microphones | \$ 1,013.65 |
| Total cost of approved proposals | <u>\$38,055.31</u> |