

SUNSET RIDGE

School District 29 Board Newsletter

www.sunsetridge29.net

November 2008

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

District Enrollment Report

Beginning-of-the-year enrollment figures reflect a modest decrease from last year's student census. Middlefork's student population dropped to 191 from 215 in 2007-08. This year's kindergarten class of 40 is five students fewer than last year and is being taught in two sections. The third grade population of 43 is 25 students fewer than last year's unusually large class, which has moved on to Sunset Ridge. Third grade and the first grade class of 47 are each taught in three sections, while the second grade group of 61 students is taught in four sections. The total of 12 classroom sections is consistent with last year.

Enrollment at Sunset Ridge School grew from 298 in 2007-08 to 310 this year. Fourth and sixth grade are housed in four sections each, with enrollments of 69 and 72, respectively. Grades five, seven and eight, with 56, 55, and 58 students, respectively, are taught in three sections. In a concerted effort to reduce class size, the District added a section in grades 2, 3 and 6 and maintained four sections for the group now in 4th grade. Twelve District 29 students are taught in specialized settings, including five children in early intervention programs.

A staff of 63 certified teachers and 28 teacher associates is in place to assure the quality of academic and co-curricular programs.

Ten new families joined the District this year, adding students to every grade level. Please welcome the Fowler, Fridell, Giffei, Javed, Logvinsky, Shin, Sunnygard, Spaan, Utz and Yee families when you see them at school and in the community.

Demographer John Kassarda, who conducted previous enrollment studies in New Trier Township, has been engaged by township school districts to prepare an updated analysis of population and enrollment trends. His findings will be shared when the data becomes available.



Fourth graders organize their school supplies on the first day of school.



Dr. Linda Vieth

Dear District 29 Community Members,

The school year at Middlefork and Sunset Ridge is off to a busy and productive start!

We conducted several traditional back-to-school activities, initiated some new ones, and participated in a few unique events. We have all settled into our routines now and are hard at work! Here are some highlights from our busy fall:

Traditional Back-to-School Events

On August 22, we welcomed 24 new teachers and teacher associates. Learn more about our new faculty on the pages that follow.

On August 23, all teachers, associates and support staff gathered to kick off the new school year. They prepared their classrooms for the students, planned with their colleagues, and attended technology workshops. The PTO helped welcome the staff with their traditional back-to-school luncheon.

On August 27, staff greeted the 501 students attending Middlefork and Sunset Ridge this year. Seventeen students,

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District Welcomes New Faculty Members

Cassandra Crist (Second Grade) comes to Middlefork from a first grade position at Lyon School in Glenview. A graduate of the University of Oregon, she went on to receive Masters of Education degrees from both American Intercontinental Online and DePaul Universities. Professional interests include a balanced literacy approach and differentiated learning.

A newlywed, Mrs. Crist enjoys reading and spending time with her husband, family, friends, and four pets.

Michael Mason (Sunset Ridge Physical Education) brings 33 years of experience at Hunting Ridge School in Palatine to this part-time position. He is also head director of Banner Day Camp and supervises student teachers at the University of Iowa. A graduate of Loras College and Northern Illinois University, where he earned a Master of Education, he enjoys sports and spending time with his grandchildren.

Bonnie Muran's goal as a third grade teacher is to "encourage, challenge and stimulate children to achieve their potential." A graduate in elementary education from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, she is currently pursuing a Master of Education in reading from National-Louis University. Ms. Muran previously taught third grade at Prairieview Elementary School, where she emphasized an integrated curriculum approach and incorporating technology into learning. Ms. Muran enjoys athletics, outdoor activities, art and travel.

Shawna Sabransky (Middlefork Music). All Middlefork families recognize the beloved Middlefork Song, but they might not know that Mrs. Sabransky is its creator. She returns to Middlefork after a five year hiatus to begin a family. "I have loved my years at home," Mrs. Sabransky notes. "As a music teacher, Middlefork is where I want to be." Mrs. Sabransky earned her Bachelors and Masters degrees

in music education from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana.

Rachel Schrader (Fourth Grade) brings seven years experience as a fourth grade teacher and "a desire to make every day and every student their absolute best" to Sunset Ridge. While teaching at the Whitman Post Elementary School in Rockton, Illinois, Ms. Schrader was actively involved in co-curricular activities and the school community. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education from Illinois State University and a Masters Degree in curriculum and instruction from Saint Xavier University. Leisure pursuits include photography, painting and travel.



From left: Kristen Wilson, Cassandra Crist, Kristin Welch, Rebecca Tobias, Shawna Sabransky, Bonnie Muran, Rachel Schrader, Michael Mason. Not shown: Kristian Velilla, Robin Zogby.

Rebecca Tobias is a perfect fit for sixth grade math—she most recently held the same position at Lincoln Middle School in Schiller Park. She also was active in Career Day and coached cheerleading. Ms. Tobias received her Bachelor of Arts in education from National-Louis University and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in special education from Northeastern Illinois

University. She enjoys reading, running and spending time with her dogs.

Kristian Velilla (Director of Technology) took the helm of a technology department in the midst of several major projects when he joined the District staff in June. Most recently from Tennessee, he has managed to find time, however, to become an enthusiastic Bears fan. Mr. Velilla served as Senior Computer Technician for the Montgomery County Schools, providing technology support for nine locations with more than 6,000 students and staff. He led various projects to maintain the computer network and worked closely with administrators, staff and the technology integration team. Mr. Velilla is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice.

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District Grounds and Buildings Get Summer Makeover

“Summer break” is often the busiest time of year for Facilities Manager Mike Arnold and his staff as they undertake major maintenance projects. This year’s activities included:

- Converting two computer labs at Sunset Ridge into a classroom, two business offices and technology department work and storage space.
- Retrofitting one classroom at Sunset Ridge into two student services classrooms.
- Installing Promethean interactive white boards and new dry erase boards in all classrooms.
- Renovating the Middlefork office to improve traffic flow and security.
- Replacing lighting in several areas to improve energy efficiency and adding solar tube natural light in five windowless offices.
- Upgrading building-specific voice mail into a unified system to enhance inter-building communication.
- Building a cement block tricycle shed on the kindergarten playground.
- Inspecting and repairing play areas, grounds, parking

lots, and a portion of the Sunset Ridge School roof.

- Replacing five sets of doors at Middlefork.
- Painting classrooms and common areas as needed at both schools.
- Thorough cleaning throughout both buildings.

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.



Dave Parks, Middlefork Head Custodian, makes time each morning to raise the flag with students.

New Faculty

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Kristin Welch (Sixth Grade Social Studies) joins the Sunset Ridge faculty from Ravenswood High School, where she was the curriculum team leader and coached girls’ basketball. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in history from Illinois State University and a Master of Education from Trevecca Nazarene University. Ms. Welch has travelled extensively in Europe and also enjoys singing and athletics.

Kristen Wilson (Second Grade). A graduate of Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor of Science in economics, Ms. Wilson spent a year in sales development before earning a Master of Education in instructional leadership from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She comes to Sunset Ridge from Lyon School in Glenview, where she taught first grade. Professional interests include technology and language arts. Ms. Wilson serves on the associate board of Northshore University Health System and enjoys travel.

Robin Zogby (Fourth Grade) is delighted to be back at Sunset Ridge after a year in a school district closer to home. “Being here is well worth the commute,” she

notes. Mrs. Zogby was an intern in District 29 while earning a Master of Arts in elementary education from DePaul University, following which she taught for five years in fourth and fifth grades. She received a Bachelors Degree in communications from the University of Colorado at Boulder. The mother of two children, she is an avid Bears fan.

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. SEVENTEEN ARE RETURNING ASSOCIATES; FIVE HAVE BEEN IN THE DISTRICT FIVE OR MORE YEARS.

The Board of Education extends its deep appreciation to this dedicated group of professionals.

Dr. Vieth letter

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not including our 40 kindergartners, were new to the District this year.

During the month of September we conducted three open houses and 6th, 7th and 8th grade transition meetings for parents.

New Initiatives

The District inaugurated use of the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) test to assess students in grades 3 - 8. Students recorded their answers on computers instead of filling in little bubbles with #2 pencils! Results were immediately available and have already been sent home to parents.

Middlefork students participated in their first International Walk to School Day on October 8. Approximately 100 students ignored the raindrops and joined the "walking school bus."

We launched our new website during the summer months, and we are continuing to add to it. If you haven't already checked it out, please visit us at: www.sunset-ridge29.net.

Unique Events

On September 2, Senator James Meeks brought over 1000 students and parents from Chicago Public Schools to New Trier West to "enroll" in Sunset Ridge and New Trier. Their goal was to bring attention to school funding in Illinois. The attempt to enroll was primarily symbolic, as none of the students were residents of our District. This event, although very unusual, unexpected, and highly controversial, went smoothly and led to increased understanding and respect for others. The Northfield Police

Department, District 29 staff members, and our colleagues at New Trier are to be commended for their professionalism, compassion, and thorough planning.

On October 2, our District underwent an extensive audit by the Cook County Regional Office of Education. Each public school district in Illinois is required to participate in an audit every three years. The audit addressed all aspects of the District's operations, including health and life safety procedures, curriculum, board practices and policies, personnel, financial data, and student discipline. We will receive a written report within the next month.

Hard at Work

District 29 students are hard at work in their classrooms, on the athletic fields, and on the stage. Rehearsals are under way for "Willy Wonka," which will be presented November 19 and 20. Our "no cut" soccer, field hockey, and girls' volleyball teams recently completed successful fall seasons with a combination of wins and losses and active participation by all team members. At Middlefork Dedicated Dolphins are currently planning a Red, White, and Blue Day to honor our Veterans on November 11.

Our Strategic Plan led to the development of several Action Plan Committees. Most of these committees are already

hard at work, preparing surveys and conducting research. Parents should expect to receive a survey about our instrumental music program this fall and a foreign language survey later this year. One committee is looking into student workload and homework, while another is reviewing vehicles for communicating student progress to parents. The Technology Action Plan Committee is finalizing procedures that will allow junior high students to begin next semester to take home their laptop computers. Finally, our Facilities Committee has selected an architect to assist with the development of a vision for our facilities that will support and enhance our current and future educational programs.

The year is off to a great start! Thank you for your continued support, and as always, please contact me if you have any questions or comments about our schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Linda J. Vieth

Superintendent of Schools



Student participants in Walk to School Day signed footprints on display in the Middlefork foyer.

2007-08 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. It is important to note that individual and grade level results must be viewed with caution for several reasons:

- District 29 has a very small sample size
- Cohorts change from year to year
- Test items change from year to year
- Performance standards change over time
- Individuals' performances can be influenced by many variables.

The 2007-2008 ISAT assessed students in the areas of reading and math (grades 3 through 8), science (grades 4 and 7) and written language (grades 5, 6 and 8). All students in the District in grades 3 through 8, including those with disabilities, are required to take the annual ISAT tests.

The 2007-2008 testing results for 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.

The newly adopted 5th grade written language test continues to be an area of controversy. Sunset Ridge

5th graders scored at the 68th percentile, as had the 5th grade cohort in 2006-07. That group scored in the 87th percentile as 6th graders in 2007-08. The District is reviewing all possible explanations including problems inherent in the assessment tool and/or scoring mechanism and inconsistencies between the District written language program and state learning standards.

MAP Testing Completed in September

Students in grades 3 - 8 completed the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment for the first time in mid-September. The District's goals for this initial effort were to establish the technology, infrastructure and staff training to administer the test and to access the data and begin the process of using it in instructional planning. The teacher Institute Day in November will be devoted to this topic.

Faculty were very positive about the testing process and a majority of students preferred the computer-based format. Results have been shared with teachers and were mailed, along with ISAT scores, to parents in mid-October.

Interested individuals can learn more specific information about the District's 2007-2008 ISAT performance by contacting Dr. Edward Stange, Director of Student Services.

Summer Projects Enhance Curriculum, District Goals

"If only we had more time..." lament teachers and administrators throughout the school year. Time to develop new curriculum units, research new materials and resources, collaborate with colleagues, and learn how to use the latest technology and software. During the academic year teachers devote their energies to the most important task of teaching students. Come summer, however, nearly every teacher is involved in one or more projects to enhance the implementation of District goals.

This past summer, District 29 sponsored 16 activities. Teachers can also propose projects for approval. Twenty such activities also were implemented this year. Some summer projects occur annually, such as the professional growth, staff development and school improvement committees. Curriculum committees, which convene on a rotating basis, typically do much of their work during the summer, when teachers can devote more time to research and planning. Other projects pertain to new initiatives such as the District technology plan, transition to MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment and implementation of the state-mandated Response to Intervention model in providing student services.

Teacher proposals typically focus on new curricular units or improvements and must go above and beyond the ongoing process of refining existing curriculum. Examples of work completed this summer include development of a K-8 Internet safety curriculum, 8th grade student services parent manual, database of collaborative online projects, and a research guide for evaluating websites.

District 29 Finance Update

Each year in September the Board of Education meeting agendas contain important financial reports. The fiscal year (FY) 2008 audit was presented by Betsy Allen of Miller Cooper & Co., Ltd. at the Finance and Facilities Committee meeting. Ms. Allen confirmed that the District's finances are healthy, and the District earned an unqualified audit opinion. For the sixth year in a row, Sunset Ridge School District 29 earned the Illinois State Board of Education financial recognition status. One major goal of the board and administration is to keep District 29 financially sound. We anticipate no need for an operating fund referendum in the near future.

At the Regular Board Meeting in September the board adopted the 2008-2009 budget. Core operating expenses are \$11.3 million in this balanced budget. Life safety and

capital improvement and maintenance projects are budgeted at \$1.25 million. The budget document is available on the District website at www.sunsetridge29.net. Current and past Annual Statements of Affairs are available on the ISBE website. Terrie Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Business & Finance, and the Board of Education welcome your questions or comments.

Also in September the Board received the 2007 tax levy extension report, now that the District equalized assessed valuation (EAV) of \$578 million has been released by the Cook County Clerk. The total District 29 tax rate of \$1.837/\$100 of EAV will produce approximately \$10,624,000 in local property tax revenue. This is the lowest tax rate for the District since 1996 and significantly down from \$2.187 in 2006. Growth per the tax

cap was limited to a Consumer Price Index of 2.5%. The triennial reassessment increased the EAV of existing property in the District by 22%, while new property added \$6.6 million.

One of the board's highest priorities is to solidify the District's financial position in order to assure adequate resources for the level of educational programming the community expects. The District's financial health is a function of numerous variables, many of which are out of our control, including enrollment trends, development of new properties which are added to our tax base, appeals by existing residential and commercial taxpayers to lower their taxes, pressures on state and federal budgets that impact their monies available for various educational programs, and the ever rising cost of energy, insurance, supplies and services.

Caucus Seeks Candidates

The Northfield School and Park Board Caucus is seeking candidates for the School District 29 Board of Education and the Northfield Park District Board. The caucus will select individuals to fill three seats on the Board of Education and four seats on the Park District Board. Terms are four years, beginning in April, 2009, and expiring in 2013.

Any registered voter who has been a School District 29 or Park District resident for the last two years is eligible to volunteer or to be recommended for these positions. The deadline for nominations is Monday, November 3, 2008. Please submit the name, address, phone number and email address of nominees to:

Sharon Stern
(847) 441-5102

(312) 608-2715 cell
sharon522@aol.com

or

Patrick Spencer
(847) 446-1768

(312) 494-1065 fax
spencer1868@aol.com



Bryan Albro, Sunset Ridge Principal, makes sure lockers are ready for the first day of school.

Hats Off To:



Lisa Brumwell

Dawn Meziere

Lindsay Schmieding

upon receiving tenure in District 29

Barb Egofske—25 years

Lisa Mattera—20 years

Ken Smith—20 years

Steve Timko—25 years

who were honored in September for their dedication and many years of service to our schools

Henry Bacon and Frank O'Meara, 7th Grade

who received a 2008 Digital Achievement Award in Learning and Engagement from the Center of Digital Education and Converge Magazine. The awards recognize educators, students, parents and volunteers who are creating meaningful education experiences for students using digital technology. Henry and Frank were the only students to receive an award this year. View their website at www.lazertron.net

Christine Becker, Psychologist Intern

who recently presented "Transition Professionals' Identified Competencies: Perceived Level of Importance, Frequency, and Preparedness" at the Council for Exceptional Children Conference.

Carol Broos, Sunset Ridge Music

who attended the Google Teacher Academy and is listed in "Who's Who in American Women—2008."

Mary Frances Greene, Middlefork Principal

whose article, "Helping Children Develop Large, Rich Vocabularies" was published in *Early Childhood*, the newsletter of the Winnetka Alliance for Early Childhood, Fall-Winter 2008-9.

Sylvia Ryba, 2nd Grade

who requested contributions to PAWS (Pets Are Worth Saving) in lieu of birthday presents and was featured in the "Winnetka Talk."



Sunset Ridge students participate in a think tank on social networking at the Digital Achievement Awards ceremony in Hollywood.

Did You Know? District 29 Faculty Facts

15.5—Average number of years of teaching experience

14.1—Percentage of teachers with Bachelors Degrees

85.9—Percentage of teachers with Masters Degrees or higher

89—Percentage of teachers who participated in summer curriculum projects



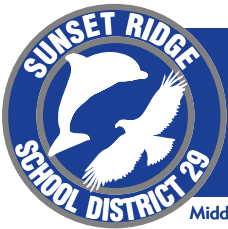
Mrs. Rosenberg's class commemorates their first day as first graders.



E-Waste Recycling Event

- Where?** Sunset Ridge School Gymnasium
- When?** Friday, Nov. 21, 4:00-7:00 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 22, 8:00 a.m.-noon
- What?** Drop off computer equipment, cell phones, household electronics, small power tools and more
- Who?** Sponsored by the Sunset Ridge Green Committee in conjunction with ATEN, a program of United Cerebral Palsy for the benefit of disabled students, Goodwill Industries, Abt Electronics, and Green Globe Resources.

For additional information and a complete list of acceptable items, please check the District website at www.sunsetridge29.net or contact Bettina Karlove at 446-0820.



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Marti von Kluck
Editor

District 29 website
www.sunsetridge29.net