

# SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTHWEST

*A monthly publication for the parents/guardians and local residents sharing good news and updates about our students, staff and the Southwest Local School District*



April 2018

## Superintendent's Message: Finishing the Year Strong

It's hard to believe that we are already 3/4 of the way through this school year! This time of year brings a whirlwind of activities and, more importantly, students' academic and social growth.

From mandatory state testing to numerous special events, the calendar is often full of activity and busyness. The remaining weeks until the semester ends can be chaotic, stressful and rewarding—as well as a great time to recognize student achievement—whether that be through grades and academic progress, in the sports' arena or on the stage.

As educators, we continue to focus on the mission of teaching, being core value driven in all we do. By realizing that education is a lifelong process that occurs both inside and outside of the classroom, we strive to provide activities and programs that help develop well-rounded students.

Teaching is more than simply pushing facts, it also includes the social skills that are so critical. In addition to the age-appropriate content, our curriculum for all levels of students incorporates skills such as problem solving, decision making and creative thinking. By encouraging teamwork, self-esteem, compassion and an understanding of the larger world around them, we believe our students will be best suited for whatever path they choose.

As I attend the numerous plays, concerts, sports events and award recognitions that fill our schedules this time of year, I am impressed by our students who take part. They “step out,” taking the risk of being on stage or on a playing surface in front of hundreds. Students who push themselves academically to finish the year strong also are to be commended. These students are inspiring examples of true learning and growth.

John C. Hamstra, Superintendent, Southwest Local

## Community Conversations' Goal: Deeper, Mutually Beneficial Relationships

The first wave of our “Community Conversations” recently started and we are gathering plenty of input from local residents. The informal discussions, which are open to any local resident, are designed to ensure the district is hearing community needs.

As part of Southwest Schools effort to build a deeper and more mutually beneficial relationship with the community, numerous conversations are scheduled.

During the gathering, those attending talk about issues such as:

- What should and could our community's future look like?

- What role should the district play in achieving that future?

- What can the schools and the community accomplish together?

Upcoming meetings will be held:

- Thursday, April 12 – 7 p.m. -8:30 p.m., Harrison Elementary School
- Thursday, May 3 – 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Activity Center

Additional meetings are planned, with details to be shared once available. [Click here](#) for more information about the “Community Conversations.”



## Southwest Local School District Featured in Two National Case Studies

It's quite an accomplishment when a national entity takes notice of a public school district—and Southwest is being featured in not only one, but two national cases studies.

The first is Microsoft's look at how schools are implementing technology to benefit students. The tech company recently reached out to SLSD regarding the 1:1 technology program, providing new computer devices to all students in grades 5 -12. The case study focuses on why SLSD selected Microsoft products and how the devices are being used by students and teachers.

According to Assistant Superintendent Corinne Hayes, "Since implementing the 1:1 initiative at the beginning of this school year, we have already seen a difference in the way students collaborate with one another and in how teachers work with students to help each learn at their own pace."



*Miamitown Elementary students learn new words with the help of technology.*

The other case study, led by the Northwest Evaluation Association, is designed to share with other school districts the "best practices" that Southwest schools has implemented in regard to student growth and assessment. Over the past three years, SLSD schools have consistently been in the 90th percentile for student academic growth.

"They wanted to learn in detail what we are doing and how other districts might incorporate such activities, especially related to MAP testing," explains Hayes. At Southwest, teachers use targeted enrichment and intervention to encourage students to surpass the expected growth of one academic year, instead averaging about 18 months of growth.

### *Student-Led Walkout Peaceful Way to Honor Other Youth*

"I am proud of the compassionate, respectful manner in which our students memorialized other youth who have lost their lives in school shootings," noted Superintendent John C. Hamstra. "The high school and junior school students who chose to participate in the March 14 walk-out did so to express their concerns about school safety."

Approximately 380 Southwest students participated in the walk-out, which was coordinated by two high school students. The event was part of a nation-wide demonstration by youth designed to urge federal and state governments to take action about school safety concerns.

During the 17-minute event, students held a poster with the name of a murdered student with the 15 students who were killed during the February shooting in Florida recognized aloud. The students had a moment of silence, followed by quickly returning to their classrooms.



### *Moody's Assigns SLSD A1 Rating*

Moody's Investors Service recently assigned an "A1 underlying rating" to Southwest Local School District for the \$60.8 million School Improvement Unlimited Tax General Obligation Bonds, Series 2018A.

The \$1.0 million School Improvement Unlimited Tax General Obligation Bonds, Series 2018B also received the A1 rating. In addition, the bond credit rating company assigned a "Aa2 enhanced rating to the Series 2018A bonds."

The report, which was released in late March 2018, cited district strengths as "healthy reserves and liquidity" and "multi-year trend of tax base growth," noting that the modestly-sized tax base continues to benefit from residential developments. The report notes, "Southwest Local Schools benefits from well-managed financial operations, with healthy liquidity remaining a key strength. The tax base is modest but growing, with a solid demographic profile."

To view the report and other please visit the [Financial news](#) of the SLSD website.

#### **Important dates coming up:**

- Thursday, April 12 – Community conversation, 7 p.m., Harrison Elementary
- Tuesday, April 17 – Board of Education meeting, 6 p.m., Harrison Junior School
- Friday and Saturday, April 20 & 21 – High School spring musical *The Music Man*, 7 p.m., Martin Marietta Performing Arts Theater
- Friday, April 27 – Coffee with the Superintendent, 8-10 a.m., The Coffee Peddler