

# 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*



March 2018

## Superintendent's Message: Architecture Firm Selected, Next Steps

A major milestone in the construction of our four new schools has been completed: the selection of the architecture and engineering firm.

From mid-February into early March, we spent significant time interviewing, researching and comparing architects. We had the opportunity to tour multiple schools built by our top three firms which enabled us to see first-hand their various strengths and differences. We also spent several hours talking with the other school district administrators, teachers, students and parents that worked with our final three firms – to gauge the follow through, the customer satisfaction and how the planning process was executed. Each firm had strong points and shortcomings, which we were able to discuss with them during final interviews.

Following an extensive deliberation, which included members of the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) as well as SLSD administration and Board of Education members, we have chosen SHP Design as our architect and engineering firm. They have been approved by the OFCC and contracts are in process. That name may seem familiar and indeed it is as SHP Design assisted with our educational visioning last Spring. For several months, they met with a team of approximately 65 community members to understand the vast changes occurring in education and to determine their impact on the future of Southwest Local Schools

Our next step is to select the Construction Manager at Risk (CMR) – this is the person who will oversee and coordinate the entire construction process. This process will be like the architecture's selection – condense the applicants to a short list; research and interviews; formal presentation; then discussion and decision.

John C. Hamstra, Superintendent, Southwest Local

## Annual "Digital Learning Day" Features Technology-Enhanced Learning

From third-grade students tracking the number of gold medals different countries have won in the recent Olympics and showing that data in multiple ways, to students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes creating computer games and musical programs, then building game controllers and instruments that are connected to their programs – Digital Learning Day 2018 was observed at every grade level throughout the district in late February.

Started in 2012, Digital Learning Day began as a grassroots effort to share best practices for technology-based educational activities. Since then, it has grown into a nationwide celebration that showcase how technology is transforming America's classrooms.

At Southwest Local School District, the efforts were spearheaded by Laura Bubnick, instructional technology coach for the Hamilton County. Bubnick created a "padlet" so that SLSD teachers could share what innovative activities they did in their classroom



and detailing how they are successfully integrating technology into their curriculum.

Above, first-graders at Crosby Elementary hone their reading skills; listening and responding to questions on electronic devices assists with comprehension and retention. More photos from Digital Learning Day are [posted to the website](#)

## STEAM Initiatives Abound Throughout SLSD

From robotics at the Junior School to working in teams at the elementary schools to create functional bridges, STEAM activities continue to be popular with both students and teachers throughout the Southwest Local School District.

STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) projects are being incorporated into the curriculum in all grades. Such activities help students develop problem-solving skills as well as enhance communication, logic-based decision-making and cooperation. Often, the task involves working in teams to address a given challenge.



At right, one of four Harrison Junior School teams explain their innovation to the judges. The Junior School recently hosted the "STEM Design Challenge" competition, sponsored by ThermoFisher Scientific. The event, held in conjunction with the Butler County, saw 25 four-person teams from seven local middle schools compete in addressing a real-world problem: pollution in the ocean and waterways. Teams were judged on design, creativity, teamwork and presentation.



At left, juniors and seniors from Harrison High School's Physics is Phun Club came to Harrison Elementary to present "Phun" science activities to our fifth grade students. The younger students learn science concepts as the older students strengthen their leadership and teamwork skills.

### *Informal "Community Conversations" Encourage Two-Way Communication*

Southwest Local Schools believes that education needs to take a leading role in sustaining our community for generations to come. Guided by our district motto, "Excellence through Relationships", we strive to create a working partnership among students, parents, staff and community that takes responsibility for both raising our children and meeting our community's needs.

SLSD is now working to deepen these mutually beneficial relationships by engaging in a series of community conversations that will help the district understand community needs by hearing from all residents, not just parents.

All local residents are invited and encouraged to be part of the discussion, which focuses on issues like: What should our community's future look like? What role does the district play in achieving that future? What can schools and community accomplish together? How can our new school buildings serve the whole community?

The first wave of meetings scheduled are:

- Tuesday, March 20 – 7 p.m. at Whitewater Valley Elementary School
- Tuesday, March 27 – 7 p.m., Crosby Elementary School
- Thursday, April 12 – 7 p.m., Harrison Elementary School
- Thursday, May 3 - 7 p.m. at the Activity Center

Additional meetings will be scheduled throughout 2018, with details shared once available.

### *Walking Track Open in AM, Afterschool*

Due to enhanced safety measures, the walking track at Southwest Local School District's Activity Center is open for public walking from 6-11 a.m. and again from 3-9 p.m. Monday-Friday, except when an event is taking place in the Wildcat Sports Arena.

There are now several classes which meet in the Activity Center during the afternoon, primarily as an overflow from the high school and junior school. The priority is to keep students safe, yet also provide the community with an accessible walking track.

The walking track will open at 6 a.m., with walkers asked to leave at 11 a.m. so the building can be secured for the afternoon classes. The bridge from the Activity Center to the high school will be locked when the track is open to the public.

Daytime walking will resume during spring break and summer.

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

- Friday, March 16 – Report cards issued
- Saturday, March 24 – Daddy-Daughter dance, 7-9 p.m., Activity Center
- Friday, March 30 – No school for students, in observance of Good Friday
- April 2-April 6 – Spring Break
- Tuesday, April 17 – Board of Education meeting, 6 p.m. at Harrison Junior School