

# 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

May 2018



## All Invited to May 23 Kick-off for Community Input on New Schools

In order to gather input from the community on the four new schools, Southwest Schools will hold a community-wide kick-off meeting on Wednesday, May 23. The session, which runs from 7– 8:30 p.m., will be held at the Activity Center.

Everyone in the community is invited and encouraged to attend this first session, which will include an update on the progress of our new schools as well as ample time for community input into the design of the four buildings and renovation of the high school.

This is the first of several community-wide sessions which will be held, in addition to building-specific design teams which will be meeting this spring into the fall. Dates and times of other sessions will be announced once confirmed. For more information, including a community design engagement organizational chart, visit the [Facilities for the Future](#) section of the website.



## Alumni's 136th Annual Meeting and Dinner Slated for Saturday, June 2

Harrison High School Alumni Association's 136th annual dinner and meeting will be held Saturday, June 2, in the Commons of WHHHS. Registration runs from 5-6 p.m., with the dinner beginning at 6 p.m. and the annual meeting starting at 7 p.m.

Dinner reservations are \$17 per person and are due by May 18. Donations to the general scholarship fund and the perpetual scholarship fund are also being accepted. During the meeting, scholarships to new graduates will be awarded

along with entertainment provided by Harrison High School's music department.

According to association president Jeff Biddle, "No matter what your age may be, or your year of graduation, we welcome and encourage you to attend."

Alumni Association dues are \$5 per member and should be paid regardless if you attend the dinner. For more information, visit the [Alumni Association webpage](#).

## Hands-On STEAM Projects Reinforces Curriculum, Learning

From robotics at the Junior School to working in teams at the elementary schools to tackle real-life problems, STEAM projects are popular with both students and teachers throughout the district. STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) activities help students develop problem-solving skills as well as enhance soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, and logic-based decision-making. Often, the projects incorporate components of more traditional curriculum, serving to reinforce the concepts in an engaging way. Below, second-graders in Mrs. Kist's class at Crosby Elementary created their own games as a way to summarize their geometry units.



## Superintendent's Message: Impending Changes to Meet Financial Challenges

In this fiscal year 2017-18, we have been challenged with expenditures increasing faster than our expected revenue, causing a projected gap of near \$1 million this year. Our cash position is strong (about \$9 million), but will steadily erode over the next several years - if our expenditures continue to outpace our revenue like they are now.

The front-end costs of adding 200+ new students over the last two years in terms of staffing and addressing special needs has increased our costs at a faster rate than our revenue flow (property taxes, earned income, state and federal aid) - for these sources, the inflow is often a year in arrears. We are working on ways to "right size" our operation, while embracing the costs that come with the growth. Right sizing involves both personnel costs as well as program alterations. Despite cutting \$1 million for next year, class sizes will not be impacted starting in January 2018.

The need for cuts this drastic did catch us by surprise, but we believe our incremental approach in addressing the issue head-on will allow for revenue streams to match the expense side in the future. It's also important to note when making cuts of this magnitude and as we right-size, the changes will be felt at times.

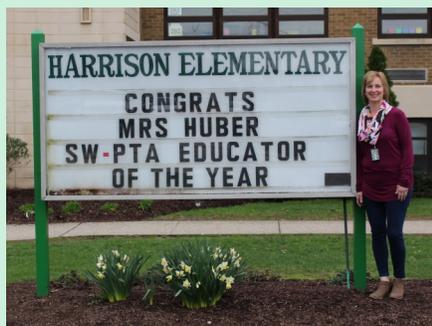
There are some changes that will benefit the district in the future—possibly increasing revenue and decreasing expenditures. These beneficial changes include: the State's changes to the College Credit Plus program (legislation that prevents overlap between CCP and Advanced Placement classes), the sale of the former Hooven Elementary School property, and the new residential developments.

We are hopeful that these reductions, as well as increases in income, will get the district out of deficit spending, sooner rather than later. Our goal with the expenditure adjustments for the 2018-19 school year was to keep the cuts as far away from the students as possible—thus, the cuts made for this coming year will not directly impact day to day academics/extracurricular activities.

— John C. Hamstra, Superintendent, Southwest Local

### *Huber Named SLSD PTA Teacher of the Year*

Susan Huber, a first-grade teacher at Harrison Elementary School, was named Southwestern Local School District's PTA (Parent Teacher Association) Educator of the Year.



Mrs. Huber, who is in her 24<sup>th</sup> year of working at Southwest Local, was nominated for her dedication and compassion in working with her students.

The Monfort Heights resident began with the district in 1993, working at Miamitown Elementary School, then moved to Harrison Elementary School for the 2012-13 school year.

"We are so proud to have Sue as a part of the Harrison Elementary team," states Principal Ron Mangus. "Her joy for teaching is evident and she has a way of instilling a desire to learn in her students. She does a fantastic job in helping those young students start off with a solid foundation and excitement about school."

"I applaud Sue's commitment to her students, this district and this community," notes Southwest Local Superintendent John C. Hamstra. "Her ability to inspire and nurture her students to be their best has had a positive impact on the academic and social growth for many, many students. She not only teaches the curriculum, but also shows students that education is a lifelong process."

### *Miamitown Pilots Flexible Seating Options*

From standing desks to bouncy balls, from wobble stools to lap desks, students in Ms. Linowes' third grade class have several options for doing their work. The class recently integrated flexible seating options as a way to improve classroom focus.



"The options are a great way for the students to expend energy in a productive manner," explains Linowes. "I've seen more collaboration and their time on task has improved."

Thanks to a grant through Donors Choice, the class was able to purchase the items and is serving as a pilot. According to Linowes, one of the best aspects of the entire process was the involvement of the students throughout. She says, "I included them from the beginning, making certain they had input and responsibilities. They served on teams to select furniture, determine budget and create our procedures. They treat the items with care because they want other students to be able to benefit from the flexible seating in the future."

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

- Thursday, May 17 – Board of Education meeting, 7 p.m., Harrison Junior School
- Wednesday, May 23 – Kick-off for Community Input, 7-8:30 p.m., Activity Center
- Friday, May 25 – Coffee with the Superintendent, 8-10 a.m., The Coffee Peddler
- Monday, May 28 – No school, Memorial Day
- Wednesday, May 30 – Last day of school for students
- Thursday, May 31 – Commencement, 7:30 p.m., Wildcat Sports Arena