

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

June 2018



SLSD Launches Community Input Phase, Selects Construction Manager

On May 23, Southwest Local Schools held the first of several community sessions designed to gather input on the district's "Facilities for the Future." More than 85 people, attending the session, including parents/guardians, students, Harrison alums, and local residents.

Following updates on the progress of the four new schools and the renovation of the high school, those present were able to provide their input and chat with representatives from SHP Design, the architecture and engineering firm for the project. Notes from those conversations, along with summary of spaces for the elementary and junior schools, are posted on the [district website](#).

This was 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.

The district has selected Skanska/Megan as the construction firm which will handle all of the build and demolition and is in the process of determining the "commissioning agent," who will supervise quality control and adherence to project specifications. Kleingers Engineering is currently surveying district properties in preparation for next steps.



Superintendent's Message: 2017-2018 Was A Year of Accomplishment and Student Growth

As we close this academic year, I think it is beneficial to reflect on the numerous achievements that have occurred. Below is a brief list of the top accomplishments for this year; note that there are many, many more on the district, school and individual student or staff level. Thanks to the ongoing support of our parents/guardians and this community, Southwest Local Schools will continue to excel in providing academic and social growth for all students, every day!

- **Passed the largest levy in school district history**

From losing the November 2015 election 38% FOR to 62% against, to passing our Nov. 2017 \$100M Bond issue for three new schools 52% FOR to 48% against. This election day victory will serve as the game-changer for not only our schools, but the community, for the next 50+ years.

- **Kicked off the largest school facilities project in district history**

With the passage of the aforementioned \$100M bond issue, we will be building four new schools concurrently: three new elementaries and a new middle school, along with a \$10M renovation of the current HS. This is the largest construction project that our district has ever undertaken.

- **Successfully implemented 1:1 student tech initiative**

Two years ago, we dreamed of having a 1:1 student and teacher device platform for our students. This past year, we

were able to make that happen in grades 5 – 12. Slowly but surely this will revamp the way we teach kids – individualizing lessons more than we ever have. The tech is not the teacher, it simply enhances what we do.

- **Full STEAM implementation and continued success in Robotics, DECA / HOSA**

This year, we infused a heavy STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) focus in grades K – 12. Students love the hands-on activities and "making stuff" and teachers love the increased engagement. Robotics, DECA and HOSA also continued their local domination and state level awards.

- **Class of 2018 earned more than \$2.7 million in scholarships and college credits**

Our graduating seniors have amassed an impressive amounts of scholarship dollars and college credits, indicating their academic, athletic and leadership success. At right, Harrison High School Principal Matt Lindley recognizes Lucas Rivera and Linda Garza, our 2018 valedictorian and salutatorian, at the senior awards assembly.



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District Welcomes New Treasurer and Hires Director of Operations

Southwest Local School District's Board of Education recently approved two administrative positions that will help lead the district: Thomas Lowe starts June 1 as treasurer and Adam Lohbeck has begun the transition from principal of Whitewater Valley Elementary to director of operations.

"We were impressed with Thomas' understanding of strategic fiscal planning and in helping to craft a stable financial strategy," states Superintendent John C. Hamstra. "He is joining Southwest Local at a very busy period and I believe his experience in managing long-term financial growth will benefit the district throughout the process of building our four new schools and renovation of the high school."

Of Lohbeck, Hamstra states, "Adam's leadership of the installation of modular classrooms at the Junior School and Crosby Elementary are just one example of his business acumen and ability to effectively and efficiently handle multiple responsibilities. I believe that his professionalism, understanding of construction management and outstanding organizational skills will help Adam excel in this position."

Lowe has worked for Great Parks of Hamilton County since July 2008, the three most recent years as CFO (chief financial officer). In that position, he oversaw a nearly \$50 million budget, including supervising the finances of Great Parks Forever.

As director of operations, Lohbeck will direct and oversee Southwest Local School's food service, transportation, athletics, grounds and facilities programs. He will also be heavily involved in the design and construction of the district's four new schools and renovation of the high school as part of the "Facilities for the Future" project.

The director of operations position is not a new role, but rather an evolution of the existing food service/transportation director position with the added responsibilities of supervising maintenance and facilities.

A Year's Worth of Accomplishments (continued from front)

- **SLSD, Miamitown and Junior School earned State Momentum Awards**

The Momentum Award is presented by the State Board of Education and recognizes schools for exceeding expectations in student growth for the year. In 2017, 65 school districts earned this award out of 610; placing us in the top 11% in the State of Ohio. Only 32 have earned this award the last two school years, placing us in the top 5% in the State of Ohio.

- **Miamitown earned National Blue Ribbon**

The Blue Ribbon program recognizes the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in striving for solid academic achievement in a safe and supportive

learning environment. Miamitown (with staff sporting their Blue Ribbon shirts below) was just one of nine schools in Ohio and one of 342 schools nationally to earn this honor.

- **Decreased class-size averages from 28.4 to 24.1**
We made a significant investment last summer to cut average K – 12 class sizes down to a more manageable number. Prior to this change, we were 3 – 4 students higher than the state average per class. That doesn't seem like much, but when Kindergarten classrooms push 35 kids, we had to take action.

— John C. Hamstra, Superintendent, Southwest Local



Thomas Lowe (above) and Adam Lohbeck, who are serving in leadership positions for the district.



Important dates coming up:

- Monday, June 11 – Report cards issued
- Thursday, June 21 – Board of Education meeting, 6 p.m., Harrison Junior School
- Thursday, July 19 – Board of Education meeting, 6 p.m., Harrison Junior School
- Thursday, August 16 – Board of Education meeting, 6 p.m., High School
- Tuesday, August 21 – First day of school for students