

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



August 2018

Design Phase of New Schools Continues as Part of Facilities for the Future

Although school isn't in session, planning and preparation for our new schools doesn't stop over the summer. In fact, numerous sub-groups have been meeting throughout June and July, focusing on design of the new buildings. The design teams are discussing a variety of topics, including safety considerations to "eco-charrette measures" (that is, ways to make the new schools environmentally friendly and energy efficient).

"I'm very pleased with the depth of conversations and the effort these teams are putting in to ensure our new schools are the best possible option," states Superintendent John C. Hamstra. "The discussions we are having now will impact not only the design but also the cost-effectiveness of our schools for years to come as we take every measure to ensure they are energy efficient and state-of-the-art."

Following the design teams input, the general public will again have the opportunity to provide feedback, as open meetings will be scheduled for the fall. Dates and locations will be shared once confirmed.

Superintendent's Message: Successful Schools Engage With Community

The saying is that it takes a village to raise strong children. And that's also true of strong and successful school districts—we simply cannot and do not operate in isolation but must engage with our community in order to best fulfill our mission of providing academic and social growth to all students, every day.

Such partnerships go both ways—while the district is sometimes the recipient of support, we also believe in assisting our community. We base many of our partnerships on mutual benefit, striving to find ways for the district and our community to gain, as well as with our partner.

One example is our agreement with Mercy Health, which has spanned more than a decade, most recently covering sports medicine (full-time athletic trainers, physician coverage, physical therapy and injury prevention activities). At the June Board of Education meeting, the partnership was expanded to feature a nurse practitioner providing primary care services within the school; with services open to students, staff and the community.

Immunization, well-child checks, chronic disease management, behavioral health services, vision and hearing screens, training and education for staff and staff/bus



As part of our agreement with Mercy Health, the high school tennis courts are undergoing extensive renovation.

driver physicals will be provided.

Another component is Mercy's donation of funds for this

summer's renovation of the high school tennis courts.

In addition to the outstanding academic opportunities the district offers, we also incorporate numerous initiatives related to social growth throughout the year. From informal projects done by classrooms to three major activities held annually district-wide, these opportunities help develop in our students a sense of community pride, compassion and understanding of the world beyond themselves.

As such, each year our students and staff participate in three levels of community service projects—local, regional and global. These initiatives range from collecting canned goods for the Mayor's Fund drive to sending used soccer uniforms halfway around the world to needy students at the Kosovo School in the Mathare Valley in Nairobi, Kenya, in conjunction with LifeSpring Community Christian Church.



Thanks to LifeSpring Community Christian Church who made the connection, old sports uniforms are now being worn with pride by students at the Kosovo School in Kenya.

Another example is the quickly approaching "Day of Service" - a special community connection event scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 15, 2018. See story on the back for more on this community-wide event.

- John C. Hamstra, Superintendent

Community-Wide “Day of Service” Less Than Two Months Away

In less than two months on Saturday, Sept. 15, volunteers from throughout the community will come together to embody the spirit of service in honor of September 11. The Harrison Rotary Club is leading a special community “Day of Service” event, in which students, service clubs, churches and local residents work together to benefit our community.

The Day of Service is part of a 9/11 memorial service and recognition effort. The idea is to gather the community to work on service projects together with a fun meal and celebration. “We’re excited to be part of the inaugural Day of Service and to see how involved our students are in planning the day,” states Superintendent John C. Hamstra.

Dozens of opportunities to serve one’s neighbors are being planned, including basic landscaping, painting, park cleanup, packing snacks, donating blood and many more. “In addition to many of our staff serving as project leaders, numerous Southwest students of all ages have already signed up to be part of this event. Many have taken on leadership roles in the planning of the projects, which is evident of their compassion and consideration for their community.”

Those interested in participating can view a list of projects and sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48acaf22a4fc1-dayofservice>. For more information, email ghdoservice@gmail.com.



“State of the Schools” Slated for Aug. 7

Here’s your chance to catch up on all of the recent progress and upcoming changes, just in time for the start of the new academic year.

Come to the inaugural “State of the Schools” event - which is designed as a fun, festive and informative evening, slated for Tuesday, August 7, 7 p.m. at the Activity Center.

All are encouraged to attend the event, which features entertainment by the high school band plus updates on technology and curriculum, district finances, progress on the four new schools and high school renovation, and more!

“There have been so many advances made in numerous areas,” states Superintendent John C. Hamstra. “We wanted to ensure as many parents and local residents were aware of this progress and to share what we plan to accomplish in the coming year. This is our way of celebrating the achievements made thus far and to kick off what we know will be an excellent year for our students and our district.”



Revamped District and School Websites Offers More Information, More Quickly

You may have noticed a new look for the district website. But the changes, which occurred over the summer, go deeper than just looks – the improved structure offers more content with few clicks, a convenience for parents who need information and who desire to stay up-to-date on school happenings.

“One of the components of our annual parent survey is communication – and one major theme shared was the need for more timely information,” states Superintendent John C. Hamstra. “The new design of our website and the ways in which we have structured the content will assist parents in finding the desired information quicker,” he adds.

For example, the district news and calendar sections have been expanded, thus showing more events and news. Links to social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, and the parent portal make news and forms easier to access.”

A free mobile app is also available, giving parents the option to select the types of information they want to view, even down to school-specific updates. Just go to any online application store and search for Southwest Local School District.

Important dates coming up:

- Tuesday, August 7 – “State of the Schools” 7 p.m., Activity Center
- Thursday, August 16 – Board of Education meeting, 6 p.m., High School
- Saturday, Aug. 18 – Harrison Hall of Fame and Athletic Boosters’ golf outing; noon, Circling Hills Golf Course
- Tuesday, August 21 – First day of school for students in grades 1-12