

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
November, 2018



New Schools: Tailwinds and Headwinds

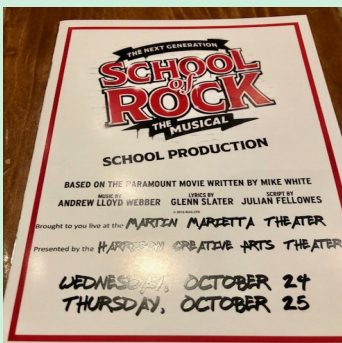
As we progress through the design phase of our three new elementary schools, new middle school and renovation of the High School, we are experiencing several tail and headwinds. We have toured numerous new schools—from West Muskingum (east of Columbus) to Fairfield and Northwest to Urbana. Numerous ideas and concepts have stemmed from these visits. Taking the best ideas from each new build and learning from their mistakes has been powerful—establishing floor plans that are both extremely efficient and cost effective as well as educationally appropriate for the next 50+ years! Our first round of design schematics –taking the ideas from numerous stakeholders (community members, parents, teachers and students) yielded a design that was over budget, in large part due to market forces and conditions. Since this first go, we have been intentional with adjusting our plans to get on budget and on time—with occupancy taking place in the fall of 2021. Traffic, topographic and hazardous material studies are full-go at each site. We anticipate having the results of these studies completed by the new year. Teachers, parents and students have been working diligently on the interior design and layout and we will be seeking additional input from the community on exterior and interior phases in the near future. Ground breaking is still projected to take place late this spring / early summer.

Superintendent’s Message: Parent Partnerships

Fall conferences are in high gear in October and November. Having a strong partnership between our parents and teachers / schools is essential to our students realizing their full potential, both at school and for their future. Parent—teacher conferences allow for face to face dialogue with regards to academic and social growth of the respective student. I highly encourage parents to show up to conferences—both in the fall and spring, regardless of your child’s standing. At times, conferences can serve as an affirmation of things going well—at both school and home, with regards to the students growth. Other times, it serves as a time to get on the same page with expectations and methods to improve. In the end, when our schools and community are working together, the results will be incredible! Our students will graduate college and career ready and have the necessary skills to handle both success and failure.

Along these same lines, I want to stress the importance of students getting involved in extra-curricular opportunities, starting in Kindergarten. Our goal is to see 100%

of our students engaged in outside activities, clubs, sports, community outreach, etc. We realize that this involvement often leads to a heavier burden on parents in terms of transportation, financial considerations and additional challenges with both successes and failures. There are numerous clubs, sports and programs at each school that will, and should, keep our students busy during the fall, winter and spring. Some of these clubs meet weekly, some daily. Finding that balance is also important. Overcommitting students, especially at the High School level, can be detrimental as well. More and more colleges and workplaces are looking at what students do beyond the classroom—to better their community and society. Meals on Wheels, Service projects at church, Mathew 25, etc. are powerful volunteer opportunities. But balance is also important!



*The Fall Drama Production—School of Rock Flier(Left)
JS Band Performs at the Activity Center (Right)*



Football is just one of many fall sports whose combined TEAM GPA was over 3.5 for the first quarter this school year!

As a school district, we are bursting at the seams! We have been enrolling 10—15 new students per week, and that trend does not look to be ending any time soon! At the time of this publication, our total enrollment is 4,118 students. We do not have a graduating class under 305 students between grades K—9. To put that in to perspective, we graduated 255 students last school year. The largest class is our current 6th graders with 361 students and the 7th graders are just behind, with 343 students. We have added 150 new students since last year at this time, and 276 more students than two years ago at this time. We anticipate this trend to continue.

The local development to the north is not finished and will continue to add to our overall enrollment—which is good! We welcome the growth, but must have a plan to absorb all our new students. Our current school buildings are about out of classroom space.—especially at Miamitown and Crosby Elementary. The new schools will have additional space and will also be built for future expansion. The upfront costs of adding students at this clip is also weighing heavily on our budget. Adding new teachers and ordering additional materials often exceeds the revenue brought in with the property taxes and earned income generated from the growth. More on the financials below. What’s left to be developed / what are we projecting:

- **Glendower Development*: 37 unsold homes remain, 14 under contract currently. 2 students per new home is what’s anticipated.
- **Fort Scott Development*: 96 lots left, 28 under contract currently. 1.5 students per home.
- **WW Trails*: 200 lots left (100 homes sold to date), they anticipate being sold out in 2 years. 2 students per new home anticipated.
- **Parks of WW*: Completely sold out. Done.
- **Short Road*: 60 family homes left to be sold
- **Westbrook Trailer Park*: Currently at 270 mobile homes, 30 for sale today. And they will be adding another 200 by this summer!



School of Rock—A Tremendous Success!

Last month, over 110 students in grades 6 – 12 participated in our fall musical “School of Rock”! It was the first time in school district history, that we have combined the performance, with numbers this high! The directors, Kelsey DeMage, Alex Couch, Mike Morris, Jason Hallowell and the Neely’s did a tremendous job engaging the audience and our students. Being on the big stage and facing the bright lights and a packed house is not easy, but our students did it!



Our Current Financial Situation:

Recent growth in enrollment has put significant stress on our annual operating budget. Currently, our five-year forecast has the district needing to cut expenditures by \$1M in fiscal year 2020 and possibly another \$750K in 2021. We also hope to see efficiency gains once the new school buildings are completed. As we continue to see rapid growth in enrollment, our expenditures are continuing to grow at a pace faster than our income streams. You might be wondering how this is possible. For example, a family living in a \$200K home, and having a household income of \$100K per year would generate a total revenue for the school district of \$5,882 per student (revenues included are state income tax, property taxes, and state foundation payments). In this scenario we are assuming a house has only one school aged child; if there are multiple school aged children– the district would be losing even more dollars per student. During fiscal year 2017, Southwest’s cost per pupil was \$9,556, compared to the state average of \$11,603 per pupil. Even though the district is one of the most efficient in the state, we are still left with an unfunded cost of \$3,674 per student. As always, we strive to provide the

best possible education to our students at the lowest possible cost to the tax payer. We also feel it’s important to make sure the community understands our current predicament—as we embrace the growth and we have a plan to absorb this in a fiscally responsible way. If you have questions regarding our finances or fiscal outlook, feel free to contact our school treasurer, Thomas Lowe @ Thomas.lowe@southwestschools.org or 513.367.4139

Important dates coming up:

- Teacher In-service day / no students — Nov. 6
- Thanksgiving Break—Nov. 21—23
- School Board Meeting (WWV) —Nov. 14
- Mayors Fund Canned Food Drive—Dec. 3—7

*Our District webpage offers a much more detailed layout of key dates and events coming up at each school!