

# SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTHWEST

A quarterly publication for the parents/guardians and local residents sharing good news and updates about our students, staff and the Southwest Local School District!  
Winter, 2019



## New School Construction Progress

Mass excavation and grading has been completed at all three sites (behind Harrison Elementary, Crosby Elementary and the High School). The building pads, parking lots, and roads have been cement stabilized. The installation of utility piping for storm drainage, sanitary waste, and water distribution will be wrapping up in early December. If the weather holds out, we expect footers to be installed by January 1, 2020 and then block, load bearing walls and stairwells by February 1, 2020. For a detailed look at the new schools—please visit our website: [southwestschools.org](http://southwestschools.org) and click on the “Facilities for the Future” tab towards the middle of the page. We are still tracking on budget and on time.



## Superintendent’s Message: Core Values

Seven years ago, during one of our annual district in-services, we set about creating a district mission, motto and core values. Over 350 staff members, 30 students and 20 parents assisted with this exercise. Our mission, motto and values continue to guide our decisions—large and small—to this day. We preach the importance of living our 4 core values (Trust, Respect, Ownership and Leadership) each school day.

Living our core values is not a “some of the time” thing. It truly is an “all the time thing”. We need heavy parent support in upholding each of our values—every day. It starts with trusting one another to do the right thing, all the time and following through on what we say we will do. Ownership speaks to when mistakes are made, we take responsibility. Respect is a two way street—we give it and we get it in return. And finally, leadership—which we define in one word—influence. How we influence others is important and all of us are leaders in our own way. We are charged with influencing others in a positive way, every day!

One additional note regarding our core value and the importance of parent / community support—this includes our digital footprint.. Using social media to promote positivity is essential. Building others up vs. tearing folks down on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or the like is essential. What we model, as adults, gets carried out by our students. It’s important that both the schools, parents and community understand the importance of living out our values out seven days a week, 24 hours a day!



SLSD Board President Jeff Biddle takes in WWV Student’s presentation prior to the November School Board Meeting (Left)  
WWV Principal Mrs. Neckel welcomes back student (Right)



Mrs. Dennett meets with her first graders at Harrison Elementary during acceptance week

This past November, seven of the 23 school districts in Hamilton County were on the ballot for operating money. Of the seven, several were also on the ballot for new construction. 8—10 of the remaining sixteen districts in our county are expected to be on the ballot for operating dollars in the next 12 months. School districts have three major sources of revenue—Federal and state dollars and then the local share. Local dollars are provided via property taxes and / or an earned income tax. When the cost or expense of educating students (and doing business) continues to increase year after year, revenues must keep pace or one of two actions must happen: operational cuts or a tax levy to increase operating dollars. SLSD has cut \$1.5M over the last two school years (2018 & 2019) and we are looking to cut an additional \$750K this spring (2020). We are cutting in every area possible—outside of student deliverables, in effort to avoid having to go back on the ballot .



Schools are no different than any business; our expenses grow and our revenues change. One of the biggest changes this year was in the state funding category. The state of Ohio froze school funding at fiscal year 2019 levels for the next two years. This means our district will receive no inflationary growth on our largest revenue stream. This “freeze” by the state puts additional stress on our budget and our 5 year forecast. As we look over the next 5 years we will need to average \$750,000 in annual budget reductions through cost cutting measures. However, the district currently has a positive cash balance through the entire life of the 5 year forecast. Recent growth in earned income taxes has begun trending up which is helping to relieve some budget pressure. We expect earned income taxes to grow near 8% this year. As always we will continue to adapt and overcome changes in state funding. If you have any financial questions, feel free to contact our school treasurer; Thomas Lowe @ 513.367.4139

## A Banner Fall Season for Extra Curricular Activities!

A major goal for SLSD this school year is to get 100% of our students involved in some type of extra-curricular activity. This fall, we were at 94% of our students meeting this criteria. We had over 100 students take part in the fall theater production Peter Pan on Nov. 15 and 16. They performed in front of TWO sold-out crowds! We have over 1,200 students at the secondary level that participate in sports, band or music. Just last week, our Varsity Football team became just the third team in school district history to make it to the regional finals in the Division 2 OHSAA playoffs. Our band won numerous awards throughout the fall and we had several junior high, freshman, JV and Varsity league champions. Students who are involved in extra-curriculars often perform better in the classroom as well. The two areas go hand-in-hand! We hope to see a large number of students participate this winter and spring!

## New Curriculum Takes Hold

For the 2019-20 school year, Southwest Local Schools has adopted a new Mathematics curriculum for grades K-8, and a new English Language Arts curriculum for grades K-12. In order to support our implementation, grant funding has allowed us to bring in a Literacy Coach and a Mathematics coach from the Hamilton County Education Service Center. These coaches work with our teachers in small group and one-on-one settings to assist them with the implementation of our new curriculum maps, assessments, development of lessons, and instructional strategies to effectively deliver the new content to our students. In any adoption year, there is always an implementation dip, as teachers learn to pace and structure the new curriculum. The biggest challenge for both our teachers and our students has been adapting to the rigor of the new curricula. The November 5 In-service Day allowed for grade-level collaboration and sharing of ideas, and teachers are feeling more confident with the new resources as we move into second semester.

As a reminder, there is a parent page to help you with the new mathematics curriculum by becoming familiar with the mathematical concepts being presented in each module and unit, and with tips for helping your child at home, as well. You can access those resources by going to <http://www.southwestschools.org/curriculum>. Please address any questions you may have to Corinne Hayes, Assistant Superintendent.

### Important dates coming up:

- Thanksgiving Break (Nov. 27—29)
- Mayors Fund Canned Food Drive (Dec. 9—13)
- 1st Semester Ends (Dec. 20) / No School
- Christmas Break (Dec. 23—Jan. 1)
- School Resumes / Start of 2nd Semester (Jan. 2)

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