



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SEWARD NEWSLETTER



From the Superintendent:

It has been another great year in the School District of Seward. It's hard to believe I am finishing my 8th year as superintendent in Seward. Where does the time go?

This time of year is often the busy time of year for schools. The evening schedule of events, field trips, and so on fill the remainder of the current school year calendar, and while wrapping up this school year, we start preparing for the next. We start to build budgets, order supplies, prepare lists of summer building maintenance projects, and we study our personnel needs for the following year. We spend time projecting class sizes, class schedules, course requests and so on. We also have teachers and staff members who will be leaving us at the end of the school year for retirements or other career opportunities, and hiring quality replacements is a very important process, and very time consuming.

We are fortunate to get quality applicants for most of the positions we have available, but overall we have seen a decline in the number of applicants for most teaching and administrative positions. I don't think this phenomenon is isolated to education positions, but happening in other vocations as well.

Another time consuming occurrence for superintendents this time of the year is keeping abreast of legislative activity. This year is the long 90 day session and though there were many bills introduced, it has just been a "weird" year in terms of discussions and progress.

The bills that I pay particularly close attention to are typically in the Education, Revenue, or Appropriations Committees. I pay extremely close attention to any bill that could impact our ability to fund education.

Our school district quit receiving "equalization aid" in the state aid formula several years ago, but it wouldn't be fair for me to say we don't get any aid from the state. Last year our general fund received \$2,591,809 from state funds. Over half of that amount was reimbursement for special education (\$839,359) and payments for education wards of the state (\$480,263), but we also received some state dollars for state aid (\$362,058 in allocated income taxes), homestead exemption (\$206,906), property tax credits (\$412,524), high-ability learners (\$8,058), pro-rate motor vehicles (\$33,628), state apportionments (\$244,013) and state categorical programs (\$5,000).

When I looked back on the start of this century to the 2000-2001 school year, I saw that we received \$2,390,301 from the state that year. We received state aid of (\$1,145,369), special education (\$645,833), high-ability learners (\$12,546), homestead exemption (\$128,467), vocational education (\$3,448) payments for wards of the state (\$178,025), prorated motor vehicles (\$23,482), state apportionment (\$162,393), in-lieu-of school land tax (\$5,361), and other state receipts (\$85,367).

Our "state aid" has gone down considerably (68%), but our total revenue from the state has gone up slightly (8%).

So what has happened to property taxes this century? I can tell you general fund property tax receipts have gone from \$5,247,229 in 2000-2001 to \$11,206,091 in 2013-2014, for an increase of \$5,958,862.

So what has driven this increase? On the receipt side, as I stated before, total state support has gone up, but less than 1% a year and it has not kept up with our increased expenditures.

So what have our expenditures done since 2000-01? In 2000-01 our total general fund expenditures were \$10,127,847 for 1,290 students. In 2013-2014 our total General Fund expenditures were \$14,996,564 for 1,373 students for an average increase of about 3.6% a year over this period. However, when I account for enrollment growth by calculating per pupil amounts, our increased spending per pupil over that same period went up an average of 3% per year.

Comparatively, statewide, in 2000-01 all public schools in Nebraska together spent \$1,928,410,090 to educate 278,209 students. In 2013-2014 the public schools in this state spent \$3,332,115,677 for 291,949 students for an expenditure increase of about 5.6% a year over this period. When I account for enrollment fluctuations by calculating a per pupil amount, total spending per pupil by all schools across the state over that same period went up 4.97% compared to our 3%.

Over all I feel pretty good about how our school district compares on the expenditure side. I do wish our state receipts would have increased more than they had over the years to slow the increase in property tax increases, but in reality, the property valuation growth in our school district is what caused our “state aid” receipts issues. We are seen as a property rich district in the state aid formula, and unless the formula changes, I don’t foresee additional support from the state headed our way. In fact next year, since we dropped our 2014-15 general fund levy to \$.86 per \$100 of valuation we lose our ability to collect our allocated income tax dollars from the state. The state takes that funding away if schools drop their general fund levy below \$.95 so this will result in a state aid loss of \$310,299 for 2015-16.

Since 2000-01, based on our school audit figures, our average annual spending increases in specific budget areas are as follows (not adjusted for enrollment growth): Regular Instruction = 5.02%, Special Education Instruction = 8.02%, Administration = 2.9%, Operation of Buildings and Grounds = 3.8% and Student Transportation = 3.5%.

About 75% of our annual expenditures are spent on instruction of regular and special education students. This includes salaries and benefits for teachers and paras, textbooks and other classroom resources, technology purchases, classroom furniture and equipment.

There has been much discussion about property tax relief in the legislature this year and I, and our school board, would love to see this happen. That being said, when I look at recent history, I feel like we have been conservative minded in terms of spending increases compared to statewide averages. Are there programs and services we could cut? I believe all schools could make cuts, but I don’t know of any that we can make without impacting our offerings and ability to educate all children; and in reality, some of our spending increases over the years are the result of state and federal mandates we had no local control over. It is complicated to say the least. In an effort to simplify things.....if we wish to continue offering quality educational opportunities for our public school children in Nebraska, I don’t believe we will see true property tax relief unless the state significantly increases financial support for schools, and I don’t get any indication that the legislature, or our governor, are interested in increasing state taxes.

School Calendars



The Last Day of School 2014-15:

The last day of school for students will be on Tuesday, May 19, 2015. School will dismiss at 11:30 AM.

2015-2016 School Calendar:

The 2015-16 School Calendar has been approved by the school board and is enclosed in this Newsletter. The first day of school for students will be August 13, 2015.

Thank You Retirees

We have four valued employees of the school district who are retiring this year: Shelley Schluckebier—3rd Grade Teacher, Linda Luebbe—School Nurse, Lorraine Dobesh—Food Service, and Judy Danekas—Food Service/Bus Driver. We wish them all the best in their retirement. Enjoy!

New High School Principal



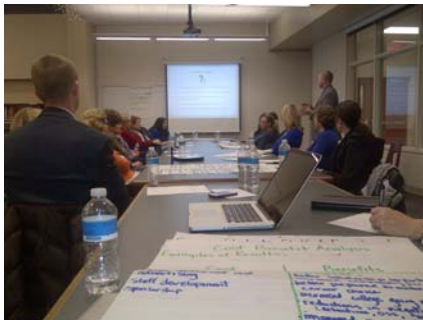
Mr. Axt will be the new principal at Seward High School beginning August 1, 2015. Mr. Axt earned his Bachelors and Masters degrees from Chadron State College. He then started his education career as a 7-12 Social Science teacher at Morrill High School where he served for 10 years. He then gained experience as a school counselor for 8 years in the Morrill, Mitchell, and Grand Island School Districts, and gained administrative experience as the 7-12 Principal and Activities Director at Morrill Jr. Sr. High School for one year and for the past two years, he has been the 9-12 Assistant Principal at Grand Island Northwest High School.

Mr. Axt is married to his wife Jennifer and she is a nurse practitioner. They have a daughter, Natalie who is 10 years old and in 4th grade.

We welcome Mr. Axt and his family to Seward!

Strategic Planning Update

The Seward District Strategic Plan and the building site plans continue to serve as our roadmap for continued success at Seward Public Schools. A lot of progress has been made during the 2014-2015 school year as we continue to implement our five-year plan.



Following are a few of the many things that have been implemented as a result of our district strategic plan. College and career week was held in October and each building (K-12) celebrated colleges and different career planning. As part of this strategy, we continue, when appropriate, to add AP/Dual credits courses. In the 2014-2015 school year, we added AP Biology and AP

Environmental Science; in the 2015-2016 school year, we will add AP Statistics. Seward High School also offered the Agricultural Academy this year.

The team of administrators and the school board members have worked on improving communication with stakeholders and positively branding Seward Public Schools. Meetings have been held about this strategy and we will continue to work on this action plan next year. As part of the student engagement initiative, Seward Public Schools implemented the one-to-one iPads at the high school and have iPad carts for each grade level K-8th. Seward Public Schools continues to implement the Professional Learning Communities district-wide and will continue to refine and improve this process. Developing and implementing transition plans for students at each building has been another school board and administrator goal. We examined our current processes and are developing specific systems, at each building, to provide smooth transitions into kindergarten, 5th grade, and 9th grade. There are many other systems such as the Response to Intervention and the Curriculum Development System that continue to be utilized and refined as part of the district strategic plan.

These are just a few of the things that have occurred this school year. Each building also has many great things that occurred from their building site plans and those will be highlighted in the building newsletters. This is truly a collaborative effort between the staff members, administrators, school board members, and parents that serve on the building site plan teams.

Immunizations



There were no immunization changes for 2015-2016. See the requirements for the various grades enclosed with this newsletter.

Below is information regarding Blue Valley Community Action Partnership immunization clinics available in Seward once each month. There will be a charge to your health insurance for these immunizations.

When: 3rd Tuesday of each month from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Where: Faith Lutheran Church, 1245 North 2nd St., Seward

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. To set up an appointment,

or if you have questions, please call Blue Valley Community Action Partnership at 402-826-2141

Drivers Education – Summer 2015



The first two sessions will be Tuesday, May 26 through Saturday, May 30 with Range & Simulation Day in Kearney Thursday, May 28th and Friday, May 29. The second session will be Monday, June 1st through, Friday June 5th with Range & Simulation Day set for Thursday June 4th in Kearney.

On-street Driving will be set up after completion of the classroom portion.

The cost is \$260 and made payable to Seward High School. Payment must be received before the first day of class. **Call (402-643-2988) or stop in at the HIGH SCHOOL OFFICE to sign up.**

Special Education Records



Seward Public Schools Special Education Department is preparing to retire files of students who are now 26 years of age and older. If you think you may have a file and are interested in obtaining it please call Connie Biaggio, Director of Special Services at (402) 643-2968 before 5/22/15. We will begin shredding files on 5/25/15.

2015-2016 CALENDAR

SEWARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

JULY

21-24 New Teacher Training at ESU 6

AUGUST

6 New Teacher Workday
 7 New Teacher Orientation
 10-12 Professional Development Days
 13 First Student Day - Dismiss 1:30

SEPTEMBER

7 No School - Labor Day
 21 Professional Development Day - No Students

OCTOBER

9 Elementary Planning Day--No Elem. Students
 15 End of 1st Quarter - 44 Days
 16 No School
 19 Professional Development Day - No Students

NOVEMBER

25 Professional Development for staff until 2:15. No Students.
 26-27 Thanksgiving Vacation

DECEMBER

22 End 2nd Quarter - 43 Days -- 1:30 Dismissal
 23-27 NSAA Competition Moratorium
 23-31 Winter Vacation

JANUARY

1-4 Winter Vacation
 4 Professional Development Day - No Students
 5 School Resumes
 18 No Elementary School

FEBRUARY

19 No School
 22 Professional Development Day - No Students

MARCH

7 Elementary Planning Day--No Elem. Students
 10 End of 3rd Quarter - 46 Days
 11 No School
 14 Professional Development Day - No Students
 25 No School
 28 No School

APRIL

29 Elementary Planning Day - No Elementary Students

MAY

13 Last Day Scheduled (subject to change) - 11:30 Dismissal
 End of 4th Quarter - 42 Days
 15 Graduation
 16 Professional Development Day
 30 Memorial Day



PARENTS - PLEASE READ BELOW

* Snow Days will be added back into the calendar. The last day of school is determined by the number of snow days used. The last scheduled day of school is May 13. The last day may change depending upon how many scheduled days are canceled. If one snow day is used it would be May 16, two snow days = May 17, and so on. Other than rare instances, we will try to complete school by Memorial Day, but in order to do so, other calendar changes could be necessary.

AUGUST 2015							SEPTEMBER 2015						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1			1	2	3	4	5
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30			
30	31												
OCTOBER 2015							NOVEMBER 2015						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					
DECEMBER 2015							JANUARY 2016						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5							2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						
FEBRUARY 2016							MARCH 2016						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29						27	28	29	30	31		
APRIL 2016							MAY 2016						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30	31				

- End of Quarter
- ◆ Professional Development - No Students
- No School/No Students
- No Elementary School

Visit the school district website for calendar event information at: www.sewardpublicschools.org

Parent-Teacher Conferences

High School - 5:30 to 7:30 PM

Tues., Sept 8 Mon., Nov. 16

Mon., Feb. 1 Tues., April 5

Middle School - 4:00 to 8:00 PM

Mon., Sept. 28 - Grades 5-8

Tues., Feb. 16 - Grades 5-8

Elementary School - 4:00 to 8:00 PM

Tues., Oct. 13 Thurs., Oct. 15

Tues., March 15 Thur., March 17

Summary of the School Immunization Rules and Regulations 2015-2016

Student Age Group	Required Vaccines
<p>Ages 2 through 5 years enrolled in a school based program not licensed as a child care provider</p>	<p>4 doses of DTaP, DTP, or DT vaccine, 3 doses of Polio vaccine, 3 doses of Hib vaccine or 1 dose of Hib given at or after 15 months of age, *Hib not required after child reaches 5 yrs of age 3 doses of pediatric Hepatitis B vaccine, 1 dose of MMR or MMRV given on or after 12 months of age, 1 dose of varicella (chickenpox) or MMRV given on or after 12 months of age. written documentation (including year) of varicella disease from parent, guardian, or health care provider will be accepted. 4 doses of pneumococcal or 1 dose of pneumococcal given on or after 15 months of age. *Pneumococcal not required after child reaches 5 yrs of age</p>
<p>Students from Kindergarten through 12th Grade, including all transfer students from outside the State of Nebraska and any foreign students</p>	<p>3 doses of DTaP, DTP, DT, or Td vaccine, one given on or after the 4th birthday, 3 doses of Polio vaccine, 3 doses of pediatric Hepatitis B vaccine or 2 doses of adolescent vaccine if student is 11-15 years of age. 2 doses of MMR or MMRV vaccine, given on or after 12 months of age and separated by at least one month, 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) or MMRV given on or after 12 months of age. Written documentation (including year) of varicella disease from parent, guardian, or health care provider will be accepted. If the child has had varicella disease, they do not need any varicella shots.</p>
<p>Additionally, for 7th Grade Only</p>	<p>1 dose of Tdap (must contain Pertussis booster)</p>

Source: Nebraska Immunization Program, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2011. For additional information, call 402-471-6423.

The School Rules & Regulations are available on the internet: <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/reg/t173.htm> (Title 173: Control of Communicable Diseases - Chapter 3; revised and implemented 2011)

Updated 1/2014