

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SEWARD DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

Mission Statement

The school district of Seward, in cooperation with parents and community, affirms that all students will have the skills to become productive and contributing members of a global community. The district is committed to the development of each student academically, emotionally, socially and physically.



From the Superintendent



Did you know there are schools across the state (and nation) dropping bussing because they cannot hire/maintain bus drivers? Schools are required to either provide bussing to students who live more than 4 miles from school, or pay mileage to those living more than 3 miles. As training requirements for drivers continue to increase as regulations change, we have seen our pool of bus drivers shrink along with all school districts across the country.

Our school board has responded by approving bonus payments for bus drivers and by increasing route and activity trip pay, yet we still struggle to have the number of drivers we need including subs. When we get into the spring and we have numerous field trips, activities, and other events beyond our regular routes, it becomes very difficult to manage.

At some point in time, if things don't change, we are going to have to make some difficult decisions about whether or not we continue shuttle busing in town, bussing between schools, and yes, even bus routes in the country. If we can't hire drivers we aren't going to have any choice.

Why do I share this with you? First and foremost, I would appreciate your help. If you have an interest in bus driving, please set up a time to meet with our transportation coordinator, Marty Telecky (643-6069). He would be happy to explain the process to you. Also, if you have others in mind who would make great bus drivers, please encourage them to make a phone call to Marty. We've been advertising in every way we know how, but we need your help please! We would be happy to have people interested in running a route or two every day, and those who are willing to get their license and sub as needed. Substitutes help us out tremendously.

Thank you for your consideration. The future of our busing program depends on all of us.



WEATHER RELATED SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Winter is near and dealing with something as unpredictable as the weather makes school closing decision-making one of the most challenging responsibilities for school superintendents. Whenever dealing with something as unpredictable as weather, mistakes will be made. The bottom line is that forecasts are not always correct, but ignoring them is not advised. If there are errors, I always hope to error on the side of caution.

I am eager to hear from the public on most school related issues. Weather related school closings are the one exception. As a superintendent I have to make the call and live with the decision to have school or not. There are going to be many opinions, but I have to make the call on the information I have available at the time, and sometimes that information is not accurate. I apologize in advance because I know I will not always make the right call, but I guarantee you the decisions I make will be based on the best information I have at the time. If a decision has been made to have school, PARENTS/GUARDIANS ultimately have the right to make a decision whether or not they want to send their children to school. **If you think the roads are not safe for travel, then please keep your children home. Please call the school and let them know your plans so we don't wonder where your child is.**

If a decision is made to start late, school will begin 2 hours late with buses running accordingly. **There will be no morning pre-school if there is a late start, but the afternoon pre-school will be in session.** School will be held when main roads are drivable. Buses will not travel untended or ungraded roads in bad weather even if school is in session. If it becomes necessary, you will be informed about pick up points that could be used when some roads are not passable for our buses. If we are having school and your road is not passable, please call the bus garage at 643-6069 and let them know if you have not heard from your bus driver already.

Once in a while a late start might be scheduled to give us more time to make a decision (see what the weather is doing). Continue to listen to school closing information as a late start could be changed to a cancellation please be prepared.

Unless some unforeseen event happens, a decision will be made by 6:30 AM and the decision will be posted on our website at www.sewardpublicschools.org and TV Stations (Channels 8 and 10/11). Weather related school announcements will also be made using **Bluejay Alerts**, Twitter, and Facebook. The alert system provides immediate messages/communications so you do not have to listen to the TV or radio to find out what is happening. We gather parent/guardian contact information off of PowerSchool, which is the student management software we utilize. If your contact information is accurate, parents/guardians should receive notification. If you are not receiving alerts, you may contact Tom Widler at Seward High School.

In the event school is canceled or dismissed early, typically all activity and athletic practices will be canceled on those days and the school buildings will be closed. If we decide not to cancel school and parents want their children to come home immediately after school, parents have the right to excuse their children from practice due to weather.

STATE PATROL, Sex Offender Registry

Are you aware that we have a number of sex offenders living in our school district in Butler and Seward Counties? Individuals convicted of sex offenses are required to register their place of residence and employment with the Nebraska State Patrol. Parents may access this listing on the State Patrol Website by going to <https://sor.nebraska.gov/Registry>. You can search by location and find registered sex offenders living near your home or our schools. As of December 5, 2016, Seward County had 34 sex offenders registered with 15 living in our school district. Butler County had 20 sex offenders registered with 4 living in our school district. If parents are not able to access this information and would like to, they may contact local law enforcement, the State Patrol, or Seward Public School's District Office.



We are required by board policy to report to parents that there are sex offenders living in our school district; however, I am also required to inform parents that you are prohibited from using this information for any retaliatory purpose against the sex offender, the offender's family, or the offender's employer.

I encourage parents to check this website on a regular basis in an effort to stay informed. I will also tell you that according to school policy, a sex offender who is the parent or guardian of a student may participate in education conferences unless prohibited by court order, but shall not otherwise enter school grounds or attend school events without prior, express permission of the building principal.

2016-2017 School District of Seward – BUDGET



During the September 12, 2016 Board of Education meeting, the 2016-2017 budget for all funds was approved. There are numerous funds in a school district budget, but the main fund for operation of the school district is called the General Fund. The General Fund budget of disbursements and transfers for the 2016-2017 fiscal year was set at \$20,937,000 which compares to \$20,487,054 budgeted in the General Fund for 2015-2016. This represents an increase of 2.2% in budget authority.

Please keep in mind that budget authority is just that. The school board passed the budget and thus we have the authority to expend up to \$20,937,000 general fund dollars; however, it does not mean that money is automatically spent. Generally at the end of the fiscal year (August 31) there will be budget authority left, but we overestimate expenditures to cover any unforeseen expenses that may occur during the fiscal year.

On the receipt side of the budget, our state aid formula generated less state aid for our school district again this year. Formula state aid during this fiscal year will be \$0, which is down \$40,564 from the previous year. We do still receive aid from the state for special education, property tax credits, and so on, but we don't get any more state aid through their funding formula.

The valuation of the property in our school district increased by \$65,581,722 or 4.45%.

The local property tax asking for "all funds" increased by \$198,639 which was a 1.37% increase. We are aware that we are asking for more local property tax money even though our tax levies decreased due to the valuation increases. If your valuations increased significantly (mainly agricultural land) then your school property taxes increased even with the levy decrease. If your valuation stayed the same or slightly increased, you might see a decrease in your school taxes. Over all, our levy decreased by 2.9 cents.

2015-2016 to 2016-2017 Seward Public Schools Levy & Tax Asking Comparison

Fund	2015-16 Levy	2015-2016 Tax Request	2016-17 Levy	2016-2017 Tax Request	Levy Change	Tax Asking Change
General	\$ 0.826046	\$ 12,165,809.56	\$ 0.797247	\$ 12,264,498.87	\$ (0.028800)	\$ 98,689
Bonds - H.S.	\$ 0.023765	\$ 350,000.00	\$ 0.023765	\$ 365,590.00	\$ 0.000000	\$ 15,590
Bonds - M.S.	\$ 0.079113	\$ 1,165,151.50	\$ 0.079093	\$ 1,216,733.22	\$ (0.000020)	\$ 51,582
Special Building	\$ 0.050000	\$ 736,387.69	\$ 0.050000	\$ 769,178.78	\$ 0.000000	\$ 32,791
Qualified Capital	\$ 0.008916	\$ 131,313.13	\$ 0.008535	\$ 131,300.00	\$ (0.000381)	\$ (13)
Total	\$ 0.987840	\$ 14,548,661.88	\$ 0.958640	\$ 14,747,300.87	\$ (0.029200)	\$ 198,639

More Interesting School Financial Data

- From 2000 to 2014 (latest data available) we looked at statewide data and compared to Seward. Keep in mind that “state receipts” aren’t just the TEEOSA “State Aid” formula dollars. We also get SPED funding, High Ability Learners, Homestead Exemptions, Property Tax Credits, Allocated Income Taxes, Payments for State Wards (Group Home) etc.

Statewide information is on the top and Seward Data is on the bottom. You will notice that our enrollment growth has been equal to the state average, but our spending has increased on average 3.01% a year per student, compared to 4.97% statewide. You will also notice that our property tax increase per pupil is 7.74% compared to the statewide average of 6.55%, but our total average state funding per pupil has increased .14% compared to a statewide average of 4.10%.

<u>Statewide Data</u>				
PreK - 12 Grade Enrollment grew 22,486 students or				7.90%
The average percent Gen. Fund spending increase per pupil over the 13 year period				4.97%
The average percent Gen. Fund state receipts increase per pupil over the 13 year period				4.10%
The average percent Gen. Fund local property tax increase per pupil over the 13 year period				6.55%
<u>Seward Public School Data</u>				
PreK - 12 Grade Enrollment grew 103 students or				7.90%
The average percent Gen. Fund spending increase per pupil over the 13 year period				3.01%
The average percent Gen. Fund state receipts increase per pupil over the 13 year period				0.14%
The average percent Gen. Fund local property tax increase per pupil over the 13 year period				7.74%



The implementation of the new Social Studies Curriculum has had a positive impact the first semester of the 2016-2017 school year. The board of education approved the new social studies curriculum earlier this fall. The K-5 resource that we are utilizing is My World by Pearson. This resource aligned well to our state standards and has strong online resources along with a good foundation in the social studies content needed at the elementary. Grades 6-8 are using the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Resource. This resource broke up the time periods of what is taught in Nebraska at the middle school level the best and also has strong embedded vocabulary and reading elements. At the high school level, McGraw Hill was chosen as the resource for the social studies courses. This resource has an element called LearnSmart which helps to check students’ understanding as they read the text on their iPad through a series of questions that are asked to the student. We were also able to add AP Human Geography and AP US History through this curriculum process. Both of these classes have been a great addition and we have had a lot of high school students enroll in these two courses. The implementation of the new Social Studies Curriculum has taken a lot of work and our Social Studies Curriculum Team has done a tremendous job of learning, utilizing, and implementing the new social studies curriculum. You can check out all of our curriculum documents at <https://sites.google.com/a/sewardschools.org/social-studies-curriculum-2016/>.

K-12 ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

Enrollment Summary as of September, 2016

Elementary

K = 89

1 = 88

2 = 83

3 = 99

4 = 95

Middle School

5 = 101

6 = 98

7 = 122

8 = 103

High School

9 = 143

10 = 104

11 = 140

12 = 121

Elem Total = 454

Mid. Total = 424

High Total = 508

Total K-12 = 1,386

HISTORIC ENROLLMENT

September of 2015 = SES-458, SMS-430, SHS-493, Total 1,381

September of 2014 = SES-461, SMS-417, SHS-515, Total 1,393

September of 2013 = SES-480, SMS-398, SHS-501, Total 1,379

September of 2012 = SES-480, SMS-403, SHS-500, Total 1,383

September of 2011 = SES-456, SMS-407, SHS-496, Total 1,360

September of 2010 = SES-423, SMS-416, SHS-500, Total 1,339

September of 2009 = SES-425, SMS-421, SHS-498, Total 1,344