

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

Celebration

The first semester of the 2017-2018 school year is coming to a close and there is a lot to celebrate in Seward Public Schools. Our schools survived the water crisis of 2017 and got to experience the awesome solar eclipse. Seward Public Schools received the Fine Arts School of the Year Award, the softball team was the class B State Runner Up, our volleyball team made the state tournament, our football team beat Crete for the first time in sixteen years, and the Seward Club Boys Bowling Team was Class B Champs. Kendra Placke finished third at state golf, Tyler Welch qualified for state cross country, and marching band received superior ratings in all of the regular season contests. Seward Public Schools won numerous State Fair Contests, and Thomas Bosmeniel, a senior at SHS, was the District American Legion Oratorical Winner. The quiz bowl team has competed well in the first semester, and One-Acts continued its strong tradition of excellence. The new K-12 math curriculum was implemented, and teachers continue to learn the new Marzano Instructional Model to improve teaching and learning district wide. These memory-making accomplishments are a reflection of the outstanding students, staff, and parents we have at Seward Public Schools. It is a true honor and privilege to be the superintendent of Seward Public Schools, and I feel fortunate to be a part of such a great district. Please check us out at <https://www.sewardpublicschools.org/>, #sewardjays and Facebook.



WEATHER RELATED SCHOOL CLOSINGS



Winter is here 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 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 two 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 402-643-6069 and let them know if you have not already heard from your bus driver.

Once in a while a late start might be scheduled to give us more time to make a decision. 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 a.m. and the decision will be posted 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 notifications. If you are not receiving alerts, you may contact Craig Williams at ticket@sewardschools.org 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 8, 2017, Seward County had 38 sex offenders registered with 18 living in our school district. Butler County had 18 sex offenders registered with 3 living in our school district. If parents are not able to access this information, they may contact local law enforcement, the State Patrol, or Seward Public School's District Office.

We are required by board of education 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.



2017-2018 School District of Seward – BUDGET



The following information provides an overview of the budget that was approved by the Board of Education on September 11 for the 2017-2018 school year. We feel fortunate to have strong public support for our schools, but also understand the responsibility we have to our tax payers to be fiscally responsible. The first chart shows the history of our total valuation of Seward Public Schools

Valuation History:

Fiscal Year	Property Valuation	Change	Percent Increase
2010-2011	\$ 928,808,410		
2011-2012	\$ 968,735,783	\$ 39,927,570	4.30%
2012-2013	\$ 1,067,156,248	\$ 98, 420,465	10.16%
2013-2014	\$ 1,185,364,177	\$ 118,207,929	11.08%
2014-2015	\$ 1,389,634,455	\$ 204,270,278	17.23%
2015-2016	\$ 1, 472,775,392	\$ 83,140,937	5.98%
2016-2017	\$ 1,538,357,114	\$ 65,581,722	4.45%
2017-2018	\$ 1, 573,912,154	\$ 35,555,040	2.26%

State Aid Formula History: Below shows a history for the last seven years of what we have received in state aid. When looking at the total budget of Seward Public Schools we receive very little money from the state. Last year we did not receive any state aid.

Year	State Aid	Change	Percent Change
2011-12	\$269,246		
2012-13	\$237,645	\$(31,601)	-11.74%
2013-14	\$362,058	\$124,413	52.35%
2014-15	\$350,863	\$(11,195)	-3.09%
2015-16	\$40,564	\$(310,299)	-88.44%
2016-17	\$-	\$(40,564)	-100.00%
2017-2018	\$232,263	\$232,263	100.00%

The general fund expenditure budget increase of \$281,327 was an increase of 2.29%.

Like all school districts the largest percentage of our budget goes to staffing. Transportation, maintenance, and curriculum materials account for a large portion of the rest of our budget.

In the bond fund we are levying to pay off the 2000 high school addition and the new middle school. The bond fund for 2017-18 was just over 10 cents going toward the high school bond and middle school bond fund. The last payment for the high school bonds is in 2019 and the last payment for the middle school bonds is in 2027, which is three years sooner with the new advanced bond refinancing that was approved by the Board of Education in November. This will also save the taxpayers \$1,282,114 over the life of bonds.

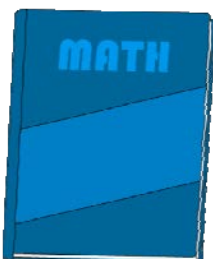
In the Special Building Fund we levied four cents in 2017-18. These funds are used to pay for facility updates and maintenance projects, as needed. The board goes through a process to determine these needs and then uses this list to determine how many projects we can accomplish.

When looking at “all funds” the tax asking went up \$173,950, but the total tax levy dropped to \$0.948 cents per \$100,000 of valuation. Every penny on the levy generates \$157,391 which is then multiplied by our levy rate of \$0.948 to get our total tax asking of \$14,921,251 for the 2017-2018 budget. The chart below shows a history of our tax asking over the last seven years.

Fiscal Year	General Fund Property Tax Asking	Change	Percentage Change
2011-2012	\$9,744,754		
2012-2013	\$11,418,570	\$1,673,816	17.18%
2013-2014	\$11,953,293	\$534,723	4.68%
2014-2015	\$11,988,067	\$34,774	0.29%
2015-2016	\$12,165,810	\$177,743	1.48%
2016-2017	\$12,264,499	\$98,689	0.81%
2017-2018	\$12,545,826	\$281,327	2.29%
Fiscal Year	Total Property Tax Asking (all funds)	Change	Percent Change
2011-2012	\$11,594,779		
2012-2013	\$12,772,774	\$1,177,995	10.16%
2013-2014	\$13,745,770	\$972,996	7.62%
2014-2015	\$14,136,847	\$391,077	2.85%
2015-2016	\$14,548,662	\$411,815	2.91%
2016-2017	\$14,747,301	\$198,639	1.37%
2017-2018	\$14,921,251	\$173,950	1.18%

I want to thank all of the people who attended the first Community Conversations meeting with me on December 1st. In that meeting I explained our reliance on property taxes in the state of Nebraska and the challenges our legislature has in funding the needed programs. I also was able to answer questions on the Seward Public Schools Budget. If you have specific questions about the budget, feel free to call the District Office at (402) 643-2941.

A Look backward and a look forward regarding SPS Curriculum



This year our students, staff, and parents began our first year with our new math curriculum. There have been a few bumps in the road; however, our students are really becoming accustomed to the new materials and are rising to the challenge that these new materials are presenting. We are thankful for our parents in helping our students to understand that it is ok for something to be difficult and to persevere for a deeper level of understanding. The level of rigor

in our new math curriculum has increased, and students are encountering math that is challenging for them, and they are having to think more deeply about how to find the answer. It really is a celebration that our students have the opportunity to be challenged every day and have to think deeply about their math curriculum.

Our current curriculum revision cycle is in the area of business. Our business curriculum team will be looking at opportunities for our students to receive financial literacy lessons at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The majority of the work regarding the business curriculum will be done at the high school where we will examine our current course offerings, check alignment with current Nebraska standards, and evaluate curriculum materials that can best help students meet these standards.

2016-2017 Nebraska assessments reveal strengths and opportunities

The media has featured several stories about the 2016-17 assessment results at state and local levels. There are two main components of the assessment system that were new to school districts for the 2016-2017 school year. The first new component was the English Language Arts (ELA) test for grades 3-8. This test included a writing component that asked students to answer multi-layered questions using text evidence. Traditionally, questions on the state assessments have been multiple choice; this writing component proved to be a challenge for all students throughout Nebraska. When the ELA test was created, the expectation for proficiency increased dramatically. The new term used by the state of Nebraska is that a student who is proficient on the ELA test is on track to be college and career ready. Though we certainly have room to grow on the ELA test, our students did favorably compared to students from across the state and within the Central Conference.

The second new component was the ACT summative Nebraska test for all juniors. The state of Nebraska recognized that juniors needed a test that they felt was meaningful to them. The ACT test is certainly meaningful and can be a deciding factor in college admission, scholarships, and course track. The 2016-2017 school year was the first year that all juniors took the Nebraska ACT test. Previously, it was up to the individual student to decide whether or not to take the assessment. In Seward Public Schools, around 70% of students took the ACT test in the past. This test is more rigorous than previous Nebraska assessments given to 11th grade students. The results again were very favorable compared to the state and the Central Conference, but there is work to do to support each student in being college and career ready. As parents, it is important not only to know how your children do on these state and national assessments but also to always remember that this is just one measure of success.

K-12 ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

Grade	Sept., 2013	Sept., 2014	Sept., 2015	Sept., 2016	Sept., 2017
PK	17	16	35	37	38
K	92	82	87	89	79
1	90	97	85	88	93
2	101	92	97	83	87
3	86	95	92	99	84
4	111	95	97	95	98
SES Total	497	477	493	491	479
5	100	126	95	101	103
6	104	103	128	98	108
7	85	104	100	122	97
8	109	84	107	103	126
SMS Total	398	417	430	424	434
9	119	131	104	143	121
10	136	125	139	104	144
11	123	126	120	140	107
12	123	133	130	121	136
SHS Total	501	515	493	508	508
PK-12 Total	1,396	1,409	1,416	1,423	1,421