

# 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



## **From the Superintendent**

### *Celebration*

The first semester of the 2018-2019 school year has come and gone, and we will begin the second semester in a few days. As I reflect on the first half of the school year, we have much to be proud of in Seward Public Schools. The state classifications for each school district and school in the state of Nebraska was made public on Friday, December 21. Seward Public Schools was one of two school districts in class A and B that received the highest ranking of Excellent! The other school district with this distinction was Elkhorn Public Schools. We know that this is not the only way to measure success, but it does show the high quality education all of our students are receiving each and every day! There was also a lot to celebrate with our extracurricular activities. The marching band received all superior ratings in all of their contents, our football team made it to the second round of the playoffs, the softball team won the Central Conference Tournament, and the volleyball team went 29-7. In cross country we had three state qualifiers: Keegan Beisel, Samantha Hughes, and Tyler Welch with Tyler placing tenth in Class B. Seward also had Vicki Radke qualify for the state girls golf tournament. Our quiz bowl continues to compete well and our social media group presented at the State Schools Board Association this fall. We have a lot to be proud of in the first semester of school. 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/>, as well as on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

## **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS WITH DR. FIELDS**

On Wednesday, January 9, I will be hosting a community conversation at the civic center at 5:30 p.m. This will be an opportunity to hear all of the work that has gone into our next district strategic plan and to provide some feedback on the district strategic plan. I also want to thank the committee members who helped create the district strategic plan that will guide our decision making for the next five years. This was a group effort as we had over 40 stakeholders including parents, staff, school board members, and community members.

## **School Board Members**

Thank you to Scott Pekarek, Lisa Dworak, and Curt Sherman for their service and dedication to the school district of Seward. We also welcome Jana Hughes, Danielle Shipley, and Jill Hochstein as the newest school board members who will be starting their four-year term in January.

## 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](http://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 from 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](mailto:ticket@sewardschools.org).

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 21, 2018, Seward County had 42 sex offenders registered with 22 living in our school district. Butler County had 23 sex offenders registered with four 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 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.

## 2018-2019 School District of Seward – BUDGET



**A LOOK  
at the  
BUDGET**

The following information provides an overview of the budget that was approved by the Board of Education on September 10 for the 2018-19 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 Seward

Public School's Valuation History:

| Fiscal Year | Property Valuation | Change         | Percentage Increase |
|-------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 2009-2010   | \$ 879,514,840     |                |                     |
| 2010-2011   | \$ 928,808,410     | \$ 49,293,570  | 5.60%               |
| 2011-2012   | \$ 968,735,783     | \$ 39,927,373  | 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  | 2.31%               |
| 2018-2019   | \$ 1,613,503,350   | \$ 39,591,196  | 2.52%               |

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.

| Year    | State Aid  | Change       | Percent Change |
|---------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| 2012-13 | \$ 237,645 | #REF!        | #REF!          |
| 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%       |
| 2017-18 | \$ 232,263 | \$ 232,263   | 100.00%        |
| 2018-19 | \$ 233,555 | \$ 1,292     | 0.55%          |

The general fund expenditure budget increase is projected to be at or below 3%. 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 2018-19 was just over 10 cents going toward the high school bond and middle school bond fund. The last payment for the high school bond is in 2019, and the last payment for the middle school bond is in 2027, which is three years sooner with the new advanced bond refinancing that was approved by the Board of Education in November 2018. This will also save the taxpayers \$1,282,114 over the life of the bonds.

In the Special Building Fund we levied three cents in 2018-19. These funds are used to pay for facility updates and maintenance projects, as needed. The board goes through a process to determine these needs, then uses this list to determine how many projects we can accomplish.

When looking at “all funds,” the tax asking went up \$104,608, but the total tax levy dropped to \$0.931 cents per \$100,000 of valuation. Every penny on the levy generates \$161,626, which is then multiplied by our levy rate of \$0.931 to get our total tax asking of \$15,025,859 for the 2018-2019 budget. The chart below shows a history of our tax asking over the last eight years.

| Fiscal Year | General Fund Property Tax Asking      | Change         | Percentage Change |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 2011-2012   | \$9,744,754.00                        |                |                   |
| 2012-2013   | \$11,418,570.00                       | \$1,673,816.00 | 17.18%            |
| 2013-2014   | \$11,953,293.00                       | \$534,723.00   | 4.68%             |
| 2014-2015   | \$11,988,067.00                       | \$34,774.00    | 0.29%             |
| 2015-2016   | \$12,165,810.00                       | \$177,743.00   | 1.48%             |
| 2016-2017   | \$12,264,498.87                       | \$98,688.87    | 0.81%             |
| 2017-2018   | \$12,545,826.14                       | \$281,327.27   | 2.29%             |
| 2018-2019   | \$12,730,870.00                       | \$185,043.86   | 1.47%             |
|             |                                       |                |                   |
| Fiscal Year | Total Property Tax Asking (all funds) | Change         | Percent Change    |
| 2011-2012   | \$11,594,779.00                       |                |                   |
| 2012-2013   | \$12,772,774.00                       | \$1,177,995.00 | 10.16%            |
| 2013-2014   | \$13,745,770.00                       | \$972,996.00   | 7.62%             |
| 2014-2015   | \$14,136,847.00                       | \$391,077.00   | 2.85%             |
| 2015-2016   | \$14,548,662.00                       | \$411,815.00   | 2.91%             |
| 2016-2017   | \$14,747,300.87                       | \$198,638.87   | 1.37%             |
| 2017-2018   | \$14,921,251.00                       | \$173,950.13   | 1.18%             |
| 2018-2019   | \$15,025,859.00                       | \$278,558.13   | 1.89%             |

If you have specific questions about the budget, feel free to call the District Office at (402) 643-2941.

**A look ahead to the next SPS curriculum revision PE/HEALTH**

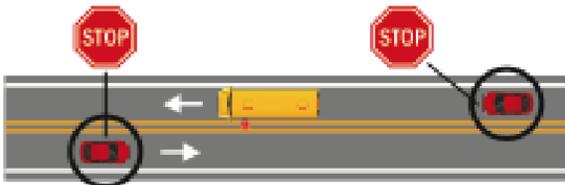
Seward Public Schools has a review cycle in place for all of our instructional areas. The review allows us to look at updated state and national standards, examine current research, and identify materials that can best help us teach in this area. This year, we are looking at our health and PE curriculum. We will be having an initial meeting of our curriculum review team on January 4th then working to complete the review by the end of April. We will also engage our District Wellness Committee in this process to provide a variety of stakeholder voices. Once we have identified the standards that we will be teaching in our courses and the materials needed to support instruction, we will seek approval from the Board of Education. Questions about the curriculum cycle may be directed to Dr. Dominy at [Matt.Dominy@sewardschools.org](mailto:Matt.Dominy@sewardschools.org).

## K-12 ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

| Grade              | Sept., 2014  | Sept., 2015  | Sept., 2016  | Sept., 2017  | Sept., 2018  |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>PK</b>          | 16           | 35           | 37           | 38           | 40           |
| <b>K</b>           | 82           | 87           | 89           | 79           | 96           |
| <b>1</b>           | 97           | 85           | 88           | 93           | 83           |
| <b>2</b>           | 92           | 97           | 83           | 87           | 104          |
| <b>3</b>           | 95           | 92           | 99           | 84           | 86           |
| <b>4</b>           | 95           | 97           | 95           | 98           | 86           |
| <b>SES Total</b>   | <b>477</b>   | <b>493</b>   | <b>491</b>   | <b>479</b>   | <b>495</b>   |
| <b>5</b>           | 126          | 95           | 101          | 103          | 103          |
| <b>6</b>           | 103          | 128          | 98           | 108          | 107          |
| <b>7</b>           | 104          | 100          | 122          | 97           | 107          |
| <b>8</b>           | 84           | 107          | 103          | 126          | 101          |
| <b>SMS Total</b>   | <b>417</b>   | <b>430</b>   | <b>424</b>   | <b>434</b>   | <b>418</b>   |
| <b>9</b>           | 131          | 104          | 143          | 121          | 150          |
| <b>10</b>          | 125          | 139          | 104          | 144          | 123          |
| <b>11</b>          | 126          | 120          | 140          | 107          | 141          |
| <b>12</b>          | 133          | 130          | 121          | 136          | 109          |
| <b>SHS Total</b>   | <b>515</b>   | <b>493</b>   | <b>508</b>   | <b>508</b>   | <b>523</b>   |
| <b>PK-12 Total</b> | <b>1,409</b> | <b>1,416</b> | <b>1,423</b> | <b>1,421</b> | <b>1,436</b> |

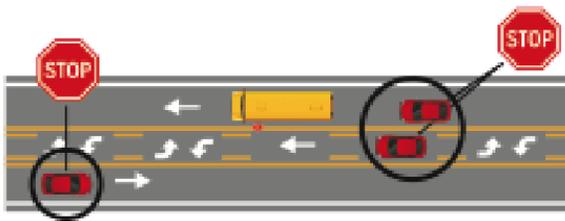
## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Each year, we have multiple people who go through a bus stop and do not understand the school bus stop law. I hope the following illustration will help to educate the importance of following the laws to ensure our students are safe.



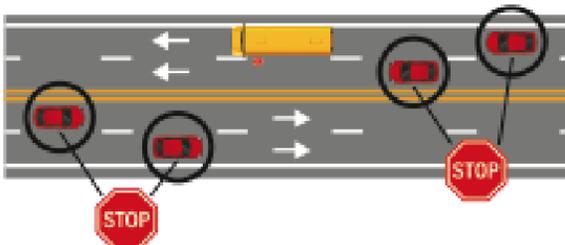
### TWO-LANE ROADWAY

When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop.



### TWO-LANE ROADWAY WITH A CENTER TURNING LANE

When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop.



### FOUR-LANE ROADWAY WITHOUT A MEDIAN SEPARATION

When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop.