

Sioux County Schools

2018 State of the Schools Report

This State of the Schools Report is a summary of the major areas of responsibility associated with providing a well-rounded education for all students. It is our desire to keep all patrons and families well informed of our history, achievements, goals, and plans as a school district.

District Leadership

School Board President-Shon Whetham	Vice-President-Syd Meidell
Secretary-David Howell	Treasurer-Jackie Buhr
Member-Jud Skavdahl	Member-Karen Huntrods
Superintendent- Dr. Brett Gies	Pk-12 Principal/AD- Mr. Barry Swisher

Mission Statement

Sioux County Schools are a student-centered environment with a mission to provide knowledge through innovative educational resources while developing each student's confidence to impact the future.

2018-19 School Motto

One who looks for limitations will not see the possibilities. Mr. Swisher and our staff are helping students build and support an environment and culture which reflects the possibilities we can envision if we do not focus on the road bumps, obstacles or embrace a negative mind set. We are working with students and staff to look for the possibilities rather than focus on the limitations. All students and staff will receive purple t-shirts with the motto printed on it. Community members will be able to purchase the shirts. The sales of the shirts support our activities.

Financial Statement

Year	Property Tax Request	Tax Rate	Special Building Fund	Tax Rate	Total Levy
2018-19	\$2,856,676	\$0.53	\$197,583	\$0.037	\$0.57
2017-18	\$2,661,191	\$0.47	\$202,584	\$0.037	\$0.51
2016-17	\$2,545,843	\$0.49	\$80,808	\$0.016	\$0.51
2015-16	\$2,618,365	\$0.60	\$80,808	\$0.02	\$0.62

While Sioux County residents have experienced an increase in taxable valuations the last few years, this year we experienced a decrease of 3.55%. As a result of the decrease, the school district had to increase the total levy but still worked to keep the levy as low as possible to offset the decrease. As has been the norm for the past several years, spending has been kept to a minimum but not at the cost of having a negative impact on classroom instruction, facilities or activities.

The school board approved a budget increase of 0.73% or \$22,628.00 over the 2017-18 school year budget. We believe we can still sustain our facilities and programs through the continued practice of prudent and common sense no thrills approach to funding our schools.

Two cents of the levy was dedicated to pay off our facilities improvement loan through Sandhills bank. The board established a goal to pay off the loan in four years rather than twenty by adding two cents to the building fund. An additional two cents covers the decrease in property valuations from the previous year.

The school district has accumulated a five month cash reserve as recommended by the school auditor. The school district is fortunate to not be dependent upon state aid as many school districts have become. The majority of our funding comes from local property taxes which serves as the foundation for wise spending practices and more local control. This current year, we are receiving less in state aid than the previous year. In the 2017-18 school year, we received \$10,627 in state aid. For the 2018-19 school year, we will receive \$7,224 which is a decrease of \$3,403.

As with all school districts, we have to account for increases in operational costs each year. While costs continue to rise, we look for ways to operate more efficiently. We have added measures, equipment and resources which will allow us to reduce operational costs or at least keep them at the same level as previous years whenever possible.

Student Enrollment Figures

Year	District	High School	Harrison Elementary	Pink School	Chalk Butte
2018	99	31	54	8	10
2017	97	25	52	10	10
2016	106	27	57	11	9
2015	96	25	46	11	14

Student enrollment has remained rather steady over the past few years. Based on our current information and projections we are not anticipating an increase in enrollment in the near future. However, we should remain within our current enrollment figures for the next few years.

Student Achievement

ACT Scores- the ACT is a curriculum-based measure of college readiness and academic achievement in English, math, reading, and science. During the 2017-18 school year, the State of Nebraska required all

juniors to take the ACT as the state mandated assessment. Due to student privacy and our small class sizes, it is difficult to share achievement data without revealing information that might single out a student(s). Therefore, we cannot reveal in-depth assessment data.

Our junior class exceeded the state average in all content areas including the composite score. The assessment results also indicated they are well prepared in the areas of English, reading and mathematics as they met college readiness benchmarks in those areas. This has been the trend for the past several years for our high school students.

2018 Average ACT Scores			2017 Average ACT Scores	
Content	District	State	District	State
English	22.3	18.4	25.3	18.4
Mathematics	21.9	19.3	24.3	19.4
Reading	23.1	19.5	25.3	19.5
Science	21.7	19.7	23.7	19.5
Composite	22.4	19.4	25.0	19.3

It is very important for students to score well on the ACT as colleges use the score to determine scholarships awarded to students. Mrs. Edmund continues to teach an ACT prep class to all juniors as a means to help prepare them for the test. This is a luxury many schools do not offer. In many school districts, parents have to hire tutors to help prepare students for taking the ACT.

In the 2016-17 school year we began the practice of high school teachers in science, English, and math specifically teach content specific skills and knowledge to help prepare students for the ACT starting in the sophomore year. We want our students to not only score well on the ACT to increase their ability to obtain college scholarships but also to learn the academic content which will help them in future years.

The Nebraska Student Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) results are rarely shared publicly due to the small number of students taking the assessment in each class. Therefore, it is difficult to share assessment data without violating the student privacy act. Typically, our students outscore the state averages in all content areas. Teachers and administrators review NSCAS results by individual students and discuss what the results mean in respect to the taught and tested curriculum. The ever changing Nebraska standards and assessment landscape also creates challenges in sharing trend data because the results cannot be accurately compared from year to year.

At the time this report was published, school districts have not yet received NSCAS results from the 2018 spring administration. This is a source of irritation for school districts who are held accountable for academic improvement. SCS uses the spring results to alter instruction and plan curricula so we can best meet our students’ needs. Without the results, we are starting the year behind the eight ball. We have yet to be informed as to when the results will be published. Once they are published we will need time to analyze the results and make the necessary adjustments.

The NSCAS is administered to all students in grades 3-8. The tests are administered electronically in math and language arts which includes reading. Students in grades 5 and 8 are additionally tested in

science. The electronic testing has required us to purchase additional lap top computers so students within a combination classroom can be tested at the same time. The tests are not timed, therefore, students have as much time as they required to complete the tests. Typically, the tests take around 60-75 minutes each.

Graduation Rate-We are pleased that we can boast about having a 100% graduation rate for the past several years. Not many schools across the state and nation have that record.

NWEA MAP Assessments-Our school district has been administering the Northwest Evaluation Assessment Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) for the past several years. Students in grades K-10 and 11 are assessed two to three times per year. Teachers use the assessment data to help monitor student progress and to adapt their instructional methods during the school year. We use these results to compare ourselves to national results. The comparison allows us to ensure we are educating students who can compete at a national level.

Reading Assessments-The reading skills of all students in grades K-6 are assessed using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills® (DIBELS). DIBELS assessments are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills.

DIBELS was developed by the University of Oregon to measure recognized skills and validate them related to reading outcomes. Each measure has been thoroughly researched and demonstrated to be reliable and valid indicators of early literacy development. The results can be used to evaluate individual student development as well as provide grade-level feedback toward validated instructional objectives.

The research-based measures are linked to one another and predictive of later reading proficiency. Mrs. Dunn administers Benchmark assessments to all students three times per year. Based on the results, students needing assistance are assessed more frequently using (Progress Monitored) as a more diagnostic tool. Students are then given intensive reading instruction to enable them to acquire grade level reading skills.

Student Academic Performance Portfolios-are compiled by teachers and are used to monitor student learning and achievement. The student data allows teachers and administrators to monitor student learning needs and achievement levels over time. The data is used by teachers to target needs and deficiencies but to also enhance instruction for higher levels of performance.

New Nebraska Academic Content Standards- over the course of the next couple of years, the State of Nebraska is adopting new standards. The English Language standards have already been approved by the State Board of Education. Therefore, Sioux County Schools formally adopted the standards. Math and science will also be adopted. The new standards are much more complex than previous standards. The reason for the complexity is to have graduates better prepared when graduating high school. On average, students are required to read, write and perform at approximately a grade level higher than their current level. In other words, what used to be taught in 5th grade is now taught in 4th grade and so forth.

As a result of the complexity of the new standards, Sioux County Schools will be required to adopt new math and science textbook series this coming school year. The new textbooks are aligned with the new standards and requirements of higher complex levels of learning.

Operations, Facilities and Grounds

We believe the school facilities and grounds should be well maintained and cared for as the schools are the showcase for local patrons and our out of town guests. Our schools are the center of activity for our community. It is our belief that students should have facilities that are clean and well maintained to optimize and enhance the learning environment so they can have a successful school experience and be well prepared for the next level of learning or work environment. We also believe in being money conscious and using tax payer monies in a prudent and efficient manner to maintain and improve our facilities and grounds. We constantly look for ways to save money and reduce costs. Listed below are the major projects which were completed during the summer of 2018.

Harrison Elementary Improvements-carpet was installed in all classrooms. The carpet will reduce the cost and effort used in stripping and refinishing the wood floors each year. The carpet squares were purchased and installed by Morford's Decorating Center of Chadron. The carpet is much easier to clean and maintain as well as reducing classroom noise.

We also completed the installation new energy savings windows throughout the building. Phillip Skavdahl and summer workers Jeremiah Fink and Joel Parker installed the windows and outside trim. The new windows should help result in further energy savings.

Annette Oldaker led the charge in stripping and refinishing woodwork and trim in all classrooms. The new stain greatly enhanced the look of the rooms. Suzanna Parker and Faith Nunn assisted Annette in this endeavor.

Underground Sprinkler System- an underground automatic sprinkler system has been installed at both the high school and elementary school. The new systems have greatly reduced water consumption and is resulting in lower costs associated with keeping the grounds looking nice and functional for our students.

Energy Savings Performance Construction- we are already reaping the benefits of the improvements made last year to the high school and elementary school. We have experienced a savings in water, electrical and heating consumption. The school board made a wise decision to approve the improvements which will more than pay for itself through energy savings.

Technology

The 1:1 Lap Top Initiative for students in grades 9-12 continues to thrive in our high school. Freshmen are issued a lap top in the fall. The students keep the lap top issued to them for their entire high school career. Upon graduation, the students can purchase their four-year old lap top for fifty dollars. Our students have proven themselves to be responsible with their lap tops and as a reward they get to purchase them at a very reasonable price. We have had only minor issues or mishaps since we began the 1:1 initiative. We use Small Rural School Achievement Program (REAP) federal grant funds to purchase the lap tops.

This past summer, Mr. Windsor and Faith Nunn serviced the lap tops and performed various technology related services in preparation for the 2018-19 school year. Faith proved to be a valuable asset to us and we look forward to using her next summer.

An additional use of technology can be seen in our Distance Learning Lab. Students receive Spanish I and II from Southern High School in Wymore, Nebraska. Mrs. Hunter also teaches classes through the Distance Learning Lab to other schools across Nebraska. The school district receives funding for sending and receiving classes via the Distance Learning Lab. For the 2017-18 school year, the district received \$7,906.00 from the Nebraska Department of Education for Distance Learning courses.

Athletics & Activities

SCS students are afforded a unique opportunity not provided in larger school districts. Our students are able to participate in numerous athletic programs, FFA, Speech, National Honor Society, Quiz Bowl, One Act Play and several academic competitions. These opportunities allow our students to earn the right to participate at state and national level competitions. These expanded opportunities allow them to expand their horizons, knowledge and enhance life skills.

This past school year FFA members attended the FFA National Convention. The school board approved our students the opportunity to attend the national convention once every three years unless the student earns the right to attend through qualification in which case the student may attend more than once. This allows each FFA member the ability to experience the national convention at least once in their high school career.

College and Career Readiness

College Credit Courses-Beginning with the 2017-18 school year, high school seniors had the opportunity to take English composition classes for college credit. The classes were taught by Mr. Rohan and required students to carry a heavier class assignment than students taking the class but not for college credit. While the course work and requirements were heavy, students took advantage of this opportunity. They will be able to enter college without having to take entrance level English courses. This is also a huge savings to parents as the courses are offered at a reduced cost in comparison to most colleges.

Blended Learning Classes-In our desire to prepare students for college, all high school teachers are required to teach in a Blended Learning Class format. Simply stated, teachers design part of their lessons which require students to access notes, assignments, lectures and tests posted on the school district intranet. This type of learning is very similar to what they will experience once they enter college. The blended learning classroom environment also allows students to access their assignments when absent from school.

College Entrance-Student assistance in applying for college scholarships and for college entrance is a major benefit of attending SCHS. Mrs. Edmund does an excellent job of providing assistance and guidance to our students through the college scholarship application process. Our students earn numerous college scholarships helping them reduce college expenses. This is a course and assistance program most high schools do not offer.

School Safety

Although we live in a small community where everyone looks after one another, as a school district we still need to be vigilant in providing a safe and secure environment. We are reviewing current practices

to keep our students and faculty safe should we have an active shooter situation. We are participating in a school safety audit which will result in recommendations brought forth on the types of practices or improvements in our facilities we could make to reduce the tragedies involved in an active shooter situation.

Standard Response Protocol- the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) training was created from the “I Love You Guys” foundation. All materials are free of charge and readily available for schools. The SRP includes four actions. Lockout-“Secure the Perimeter,” Lockdown-“Locks, Lights, Out of Sight,” Evacuate-“To the Announced Location,” and Shelter-“For a Hazard Using a Safety Strategy.” Each action is followed by a directive. The training provided strategies and recommendations to keep students and staff safe during an emergency situation.

The desire of the State would be all schools in NE use this system. This allows all school staff, parents, students and community members to use the same process and common language which will help keep everyone safe at school sponsored activities.

Closing Remarks by Superintendent Dr. Brett Gies

As school superintendent, this report was designed to be an informative reminder of all the good things into a state of complacency. What used to work for us in the past may not work for us in the present or the future. We have to keep looking to the future while working in the present. I like to keep the perspective that we are educating students in kindergarten for a world that will drastically change by the time they graduate. Jobs and careers will be created that do not exist now. So our challenge as a school system and community is to prepare students with skills and knowledge they can apply in fields that do not currently exist.

This year’s motto reflects my belief that if we focus on the possibilities and let go of the focus on limitations, we will be able to achieve heights never before imagined. A lot of research has been conducted to show the power of having a positive growth mind set rather than a negative fixed mind set. It is more important to focus on possibilities rather than seeking out the limitations.

