SCHOOL DISTRICT of SHEBOYGAN FALLS
Expect the Exceptional

SCHOOLS…
AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY

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WELCOME TO EXCEPTIONAL!

From the Superintendent

At the heart of every successful community is a place where children are inspired and where young minds are encouraged to grapple with new ideas; creativity is cultivated; and cooperation is fostered. This place is called school. It is an important place where the future health and integrity of a community is shaped.

Schools have a unique vantage point to unite community members in the common cause of ensuring educational quality for our children. To adequately reflect the values and hopes of an entire community, it is essential that all community members, representing broad points of view, are welcomed in our schools. Only together can we achieve our vision — to be a community that inspires each student to reach his or her full potential with exceptional educators.

We value educational opportunities that occur in our buildings, and the opportunities that extend beyond the classroom into our community, too. Our teachers and staff provide real opportunities to practice teamwork through athletic competitions, productions of young artists, and performances of musicians. Our community benefits from students learning the value of civic engagement, effective communication, leadership, and sportsmanship when students participate with various local organizations and represent our schools at various events.

An investment in purposeful and efficient schools brings results for young people. Students are prepared to successfully navigate a wide variety of life’s pathways, many of which will benefit the community directly. This requires that students are taught how to look at problems and engineer solutions, how to acquire and use practical skills, and how to approach challenges with confidence and resolve. Effective schools teach the importance of tolerance and the value of cooperation to achieve higher goals.

The value that a community places in its schools, as measured by the involvement of parent and community stakeholders, can serve as a beacon of light that will shine brightly when everyone works together. This light shows our children that we care about them as individuals and guides young adults through their journey toward adulthood.

Please join us as we light the way toward a brighter future for the children of our community.

Jean Born,
Superintendent, School District of Sheboygan Falls

Jean Born

Welcome to the School District of Sheboygan Falls

On behalf of the Board of Education, welcome to the School District of Sheboygan Falls annual report. It contains exciting news as well as financial information. The Board takes its fiduciary responsibility seriously and pledges to remain good stewards of your tax dollars.

The district is made up of caring professionals whose main goals are to provide students with a safe and innovative learning environment. We work hard each year to improve our curriculum and instruction to enable our students to prepare for the next phases of their lives.

A major focus in 2016 has been to strengthen our community connections. The district was a participant in the “Supporting Our Heroes” campaign which raised funds to purchase life-saving equipment. It is the district’s desire to continue in partnership with community leaders to strengthen our community. We extend our appreciation to the volunteers who served on the Facilities Advisory Committee and provided meaningful feedback to the Board as we deliberated on the best solution to the aging middle school facility.

On November 8, the district will propose a referendum in search of a long-term solution for its aging middle school. We encourage all voters to become educated on the facts of the proposal. We will make the facts publicly available in a manner which is straightforward and transparent. Please contact any Board member or school official for information and allow us to answer your questions.

We are extremely proud of our district and promise to continue our efforts to make the School District of Sheboygan Falls even better.

John Mauer
President, Sheboygan Falls Board of Education
In the School District of Sheboygan Falls we reach outside the school walls for opportunities to enhance student educational experiences that involve students within the community. We are fortunate that many members of our community “give back” to our schools through their time, talent, participation, partnership and support with our educational program and school events.

This brief look back at the 2015-16 school year provides a few snapshots of how district students, staff, and families live our commitment… We are community.

Learning Outside the Classroom Walls…

- Eighth grade students planted 5,000 plants and collected garbage at Deland Park Beach as part of the Alliance for the Great Lakes for a Coastal Restoration Stewardship Day.

- Jazz at the Park is a popular spring tradition featuring student musicians.

- The SFHS art club, better known as the Society Of Fine Artists (SoFA), hosted their first ever high school art show in May 2016. Parents, students, and community members were invited to enjoy their talents.

- Through hard work, AG students raise fresh food that complement school meals. The high school agriculture education program was featured in the August 2015 edition of Wisconsin School News, published statewide by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards.

Students Host Business Leaders

- The February Chamber-Main Street “Business and Bagels” program was held at the high school. The morning featured the culinary students, show choir, and a focus on career and technical education curriculum. It also included a tour of the E-wing.

Coming Together for a Cause!

- Make a Difference week in our schools launched the Strengthening Community: Supporting Our Heroes campaign. This community-wide effort embraced a fundraising campaign to help provide life-saving equipment for our local fire departments and first responders. In May, the elementary PTO and the high school physical education teacher hosted a Color Run for students, families and community members to support this fundraiser.

Preparing Students as Citizens

- Families Recognize Excellence in Farm to School Program

In May, the district’s Farm to School Program was nominated by families and named “One in a Melon” by the Farm to School Program in Wisconsin by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The “One in a Melon” award is given for exemplary farm to school programs. One school district per state was selected for the award by receiving the most public nominations.

Families Recognize Excellence in Farm to School Program

- 134 graduates received their high school diploma. We wish them well for a successful and satisfying future. Congratulations to seniors who received scholarships. Just over $416,000 was awarded to the Class of 2016 through local scholarship programs.
Turning Up the Heat On Manufacturing Careers

In a bid to spark student interest in manufacturing careers, a technology education class at Sheboygan Falls High School really turns up the heat. Literally.

Project Grill teaches students about the entire manufacturing process – from design to budgeting to fabrication – as they create and build a fully functioning grill. The process culminates in an unveiling where students present their finished product to a panel of “celebrity” judges and compete with teams from other Sheboygan County high schools. Points are awarded for creativity, the presentation, how closely they adhered to their budget and the design process.

This year’s grill – made from a reconstructed 1953 Willys-Overland Jeepster that had been donated to the project – earned the Sheboygan Falls team 495 out of a possible 500 points.

“We had a great year,” said technology education teacher Curt Tienissen. “I never dreamed we would score that close to perfect.”

The process starts in the fall when students meet to brainstorm design ideas. They also receive help from a local business sponsor, which provides technical and advisory support. This year’s sponsor was Bemis Manufacturing.

Connecting students with local manufacturers is a key component of the project.

Almost 40% of the jobs in Sheboygan County are manufacturing jobs and many companies have trouble finding enough workers to fill positions. Many students do not consider going into manufacturing because they are not familiar with the wide array of career possibilities that exist at local companies.

Project Grill gives students direct exposure to the variety of manufacturing careers by taking them through the entire process of producing a finished product.

Students receive credits at Lakeshore Technical College for participating in Project Grill.

Because of the amount of time involved in the process, the Project Grill class at Sheboygan Falls will be a full year class next year instead of just a semester as it was this year.

For several students at Sheboygan Falls Elementary School, giving up a whole day of recess once a month was not a problem this year. In fact, they couldn’t wait.

“The students are always very excited for special art class day. They frequently ask when the next day is,” said their teacher, Kristin Vogel, who works with the first and second graders who have a variety of special education needs.

The students have been exploring a variety of art materials and techniques during an extended art time held once a month on Thursdays. During each of their three recess periods that day – which are roughly 20-25 minutes each – the students go to the art room instead of the gym or playground and work on a project with art teacher Rocky Hoes.

“My point was to get them in here and just start opening it up to exploration,” said Hoes, who came up with the idea after deciding to focus on new ways to engage special education students in art.

Because there are three separate periods, students can start and finish a project within the course of a single day. Hoes usually gives the students a theme – such as nature, a favorite family member or food – and provides a variety of materials that have included watercolors, acrylic paint and clay among others.

Ann Roy, director of student services for Sheboygan Falls, was delighted when Vogel and Hoes approached her about trying the project.

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“I was just all for it,” Roy said. “These are students with a wide range of educational needs. Oftentimes art can bring out the best in them but in a large group setting it can be hard for them.”

One of the students’ final projects was extra special. They made clay planters shaped like human heads with faces complete with eyes, noses, mouths, ears and even eyebrows. They glazed them and used the kiln to fire them. Eventually, they will be filled with dirt and planted with grass seed. When the grass grows, it will look like hair.

The plants were even part of a special art show in Madison. Hoes plans to continue the class next year.

Supporting Our Heroes...

The Chamber-Main Street and the School District of Sheboygan Falls joined together to raise funds for fire and first response equipment as well as smoke alarms for community members after a fire tragedy struck a local family this past spring. “This fundraiser was an effort to pay it forward and help equip our local firefighters and first responders with life-saving equipment that might not otherwise be affordable in the department’s regular budget,” said Jean Born, superintendent.

As part of this local business-school partnership, the Chamber-Main Street and school offices sold paper fire trucks for $1 or a donation of personal choice. Local businesses, including Piggy Wiggly, Firehouse Pizza, and Bouncy House offered fundraising events. The elementary school PTO hosted a color run, with a portion of the registration fees donated to the cause. Additionally, the Chamber-Main Street distributed smoke alarms at the Ducktona 500 on July 3. Yard signs were available for purchase to support the fundraiser.

“When we asked the Chamber if they wanted to get involved, we received a resounding yes,” said Born. Born and Shirl Brenig, executive director of Chamber-Main Street, presented the idea to the Sheboygan Falls Fire Department, the Sheboygan Falls Board of Education, the Chamber-Main Street Board of Directors and the City Council, hoping to keep everyone informed and on board.

“Our goal is to paint the town purple and gold in support of the Sheboygan Falls Fire Department and all they do to keep us safe,” said Brenig, when she and Born presented the idea to the City Council on March 1.

Born said that the School District and Chamber relied on volunteers and donations to make the effort a success. “It’s amazing what people will do if you just ask,” said Born. At the time of printing, over $6,000 was collected.

“If we were able to help the department save one life or prevent one injury because of equipment that the department can now purchase or through training, then the effort was well worth it,” said Born.
At its April 18, 2016 meeting, the Board of Education of the School District of Sheboygan Falls received a written and verbal report from its ad hoc Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC). The completely volunteer FAC was formed in January 2016 and was comprised of approximately 25 community members, representing parents, business owners, staff, and general community members. The group met six times between January and April. The FAC was formally asked by the School Board to provide meaningful input on potential solutions to address serious facility needs at Sheboygan Falls Middle School. Four representatives offered to synthesize the input and discussions generated by the FAC into a brief summary and share this information with the School Board during its regular meeting in April.

Community members Ray Ramos, Rick LeMahieu, and Chuck Otte spoke on behalf of the FAC, with two additional committee members, Mike Daley and Brad Veenendaal, offering additional thoughts as members of the audience.

**Committee Reviews Four Options**
The primary focus of the FAC was to help the Board evaluate and consider four preliminary solutions being considered to address the middle school. These options included:

- Build a new middle school at the current middle school site (demolishing the existing building);
- Renovate and remodel the current middle school (including selective demolition and some new construction);
- Build a new middle school on property near the current elementary school;
- Build an addition to the high school for grades 7-8 and build an addition to the elementary school for grades 5-6, and close the existing middle school when the projects are complete.

**FAC Narrows the Field to Two**
A summary of the highlights presented to the Board by Ramos, LeMahieu, and Otte included:

- There was no “slam dunk” option that the full group could unanimously agree upon.
- After considering the millions of dollars it would cost, renovating the existing middle school site was not recommended.
- The plan to build on the current site was amongst the least popular, while some people did favor a central location.
- Capital maintenance needs in other district facilities should be considered as separate projects rather than bundled into any solution to address middle school needs.
- There was clear indication that “doing nothing” was not an option.

The FAC concluded that two options were the most favored:

- Build a new middle school at the elementary school site or;
- Move 7th-8th grade students to the high school and 5th-6th grade students to the elementary school with new construction and traffic improvements.

The FAC recommended that Board members should investigate those two options further.

**Board Returns with One Option**
After receiving input from the FAC, the Board of Education continued to review possible solutions.

First, the Board aligned its decision-making to the facilities vision. Further, the Board collected input from district employees about how each building plan would affect educational programming options for students. The Board also investigated the long-term value of each solution and the overall costs of each building plan.

The FAC input, combined with further analysis, focused the Board on one solution: build a new middle school on the existing elementary school site. Several major considerations still under investigation include on-site traffic flow and site improvements.

On June 27, the Board invited members of the Facilities Advisory Committee to a meeting to hear a progress update. At that meeting Board president John Mauer and Board member Vicky Bramstedt shared that the Board is advancing building a new middle school at the elementary school site. Several major considerations still under investigation include on-site traffic flow and site improvements.

Further work continues to fully vet this solution. At the writing of this Annual Report, the Board anticipates making a final decision on a proposed middle school facilities solution in August, and then presenting it to the community in a November referendum.
Fiscal Responsibility

Each year the School District of Sheboygan Falls develops a budget to meet student learning needs. Almost half of our revenues come from the state, and we are committed to managing resources wisely to provide the best possible return on investment to the community. Here are some budget highlights:

- We created an Innovation and Design (ID) Center in the high school from space that had been used as storage for the maintenance department. Rather than building an expensive stand-alone Innovation and Design Center or incur ongoing rental costs for storage, the district built a storage facility. This freed up the space in the high school building to allow for development of the ID Center. The ID Center has allowed the district to collaborate with area manufacturers to acquire state-of-the-art equipment which will provide students with high-tech hands-on learning. An unveiling is planned for October of 2016.

- We have decreased debt to reduce interest costs and pay down debt sooner. We saved nearly $153,000 in interest costs through March 2016 by paying the debt down sooner without increasing the overall school property tax levy.

- We are investing in property and facilities projects that will create long-term energy and operational efficiencies. Examples include considering the type of lighting, flooring or positioning of equipment so that the ongoing maintenance costs will be more efficient and cost effective.

2016-17 Budget Overview

With student enrollment declining and state-imposed revenue caps remaining in place with no increase, our district must continue to find ways to align expenses to available resources to continue our efforts to support students.

At our district Budget Hearing on July 25, the electorate will review a preliminary 2016-17 budget. The budget will be adjusted as necessary before final board approval in October. By that time, the district will have final enrollment, property value and state aid information.

Following the Budget Hearing, the proposed property tax levy of $8,770,422, will be up for approval during the Annual Meeting. The estimated property tax rate will decrease by about 2.25% or $0.23 cents per $1,000 of equalized property value. That equates to an annual decrease of about $23 for a $100,000 home.
Sheboygan Falls Recognized for Innovative Computer Programming

It’s never too early to learn to code. That’s the philosophy in the School District of Sheboygan Falls where students start lessons in computer programming beginning in Kindergarten.

Kodable, an elementary computer programming curriculum, uses mazes to teach students in kindergarten through fifth grades how algorithms work. They also write code to make robots follow simple commands. Students work at their own pace and the lessons help hone their problem-solving skills.

This innovative approach has earned the district national recognition. Sheboygan Falls was among 12 school districts across the country recognized for ground breaking work in digital curriculum and learning strategies by the Center for Digital Education (CDE), in collaboration with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), at the fourth-annual Digital Content and Curriculum Achievement Awards. Awards were presented to schools in three categories – based on enrollment. Sheboygan Falls was recognized in the small school or district category. Sheboygan Falls was the top honoree in its category and the only district in Wisconsin to receive an award.

Barry Ludvik, district technology coordinator, said the computer apps and lessons the district uses develop critical thinking skills in students because they are based on trial and error.

“For kids to be successful, it’s really important to develop those higher-order thinking skills, but also the resiliency to get to that point – not giving up right away,” Ludvik said.

“If it doesn’t go right the first time, you’ve got the chance to figure out where things went wrong, to work with another student, so you’ve got collaboration built in there as well,” he added.

“All of those things go in there together with the main goal of, ‘What makes a good thinker?’ We don’t want everybody to become a computer programmer. The idea is that we want you all to be good thinkers because then whatever you chose to do later on in life, you’re going to be good at it.”

He praised classroom teachers for their efforts in making the initiative so successful.

“The program’s success hinges on teachers integrating the lessons into their curriculum,” Ludvik said.