



## PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE ... TODAY



*Students solve real-world problems through hands-on Project Lead the Way activities.*

Computer Science and authentic problem solving merge in District 29, creating unique learning opportunities for students that are preparing them for the future, today.

As a cornerstone, the District utilizes the Project Lead The Way (PLTW) curriculum which focuses on the application of math, science, computer coding, design and modeling to solve real-world problems. It begins in kindergarten and extends through 8th grade.

“I think we are ahead of the curve in terms of a K-8 plan for coding/computer science,” notes Middlefork Prin-

cipal Dr. Mary Frances Greene. “Students as young as kindergarten write code and make programs to guide objects through sets of mazes. They work in collaborative teams to design interactive programs, animations, robots, and functional objects.”

PLTW and the Computer Science program extend beyond computer coding and robots. Students also integrate science and mathematics in designing solutions to authentic problems. A recent project required students to design and build a therapeutic toy for a child who has cerebral

palsy. Students also used Computer Aided Design and 3D printing to create functional objects.

Students share that they love to write computer code, innovate with the 3D printer, design robots, and incorporate their creativity in learning activities. The principals report that the collaborative team approach helps to develop social and communication skills, and fosters positive peer relationships.

“Our computer science program is teaching students so much more than the basics of coding,” says Dr. Greene. “As the world around us changes, students are learning skills to help them overcome obstacles, solve problems, and work in teams, which will serve them well in the future.”

Sunset Ridge Principal Dr. Ivy Sukenik adds that students are learning to think and problem-solve in creative ways, to consider alternative perspectives, and to utilize technology in meaningful and engaging learning.

Recently, Sunset Ridge served as a “PLTW Showcase Site” for educators from across the midwest to observe this cutting edge programming.

## CALLING ALL KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Kindergarten registration is now open to all children turning five years old before September 1, 2018. Contact the Middlefork School office at

847-881-9500, or visit the District 29 website for more information, including downloadable enrollment forms. Parents and guardians are encouraged

to register as soon as possible, as early determination of enrollment figures is critical in planning for the upcoming school year.

# FINDING SUCCESS IN A CHANGING WORLD



A recent report investigating the changing face of public elementary education over the past 20 years highlighted the increasing diversity of learners and the evolution of technology as key factors “pushing” change in the modern learning environment.

A growing body of literature suggests that the skills required to prepare students for the 21st century workforce and society are also changing. While schools historically focused on traditional academics and content knowledge, they are now integrating digital literacy, analytic reasoning, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork skills into the curriculum. This best practices movement is “pulling” us to change the modern learning environment.

In District 29 classrooms, students now play a more active role in their education, engaging in more critical thinking and problem solving in a digital environment. They write computer code, build robots, design and model using Computer Aided Design (CAD), and use 3D printing as early as kindergarten! They research, problem solve, and communicate on teams. Teacher-student communication and feedback is more immediate, efficient, and effective through web-based information sharing.

Implementing such programming requires a cadre of specialized staff to support the selection, maintenance, and training for the myriad of technology-based devices and services utilized by our staff and students.



*A student uses the Computer Aided Design software during class.*

The dramatic increase in unique student learning needs is an equally impactful issue for public education. Prevalence rates indicate that about 13% of public school students have a diagnosed disability (e.g., learning disability, autism), and another 15-20% have an undiagnosed mental health issue (e.g., anxiety, depression, attention deficit disorder). With almost a third of students facing unique learning challenges, meeting their academic and social-emotional needs requires a comprehensive array of support staff, expertise, training, and services.

District 29 currently employs 18 certified staff and 21 teaching assistants to provide a broad contin-

uum of supports for students with unique learning needs. That represents about an 85% increase from 20 years ago! Our staff actively integrate social emotional learning (e.g., decision making skills, social skills, self management skills) into the curriculum. They provide assessment and direct intervention services for students with a variety of physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and language/communication issues. They train staff, coordinate with providers, and facilitate resources for parents. While these staff are employed to primarily provide services to students with disabilities, their services and expertise benefit all students.

Understanding the factors that “push” and “pull” educational change helps us appreciate the increasing complexity of high quality educational programming, and to understand the associated costs of maintaining a highly effective 21st Century educational environment. I am honored to lead a district that is not only meeting the changing needs of our learners, but also taking the lead in preparing our students with the skills necessary for future success.

**Dr. Edward Stange**  
*Superintendent, District 29*

## ATTENTION 2014 SUNSET RIDGE GRADUATES

Applications for the Dr. B Scholarship Award are now available on the District 29 website. If you are a 2014 alumnus planning on attending col-

lege in the future, you are eligible for this \$1500 award. Selection is based upon a demonstrated commitment to scholarship and service, as were in-

stilled by Dr. Bultinck during his tenure as superintendent. All applications are due by March 16, 2018, with the recipient announced in June.

# DISTRICT 29 IN STRONG FINANCIAL SHAPE

District 29 Chief School Business Official Tom Beerheide recently reported to the Board of Education that all financial measures indicate the District is in a strong financial position.

For the 14th consecutive year, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) issued District 29 a Certificate of Financial Recognition, with the highest possible financial rating of 4.0. This is based upon an ISBE review of the District's most recent financial statements. Just 375 of the 852 school districts in Illinois earned the 4.0 rating.

Moody's Investors Service recently reaffirmed the District's Aaa rating, the

highest rating available. Moody's noted that the District has a very strong liquid position, affluent tax base, and strong fiscal management.

An independent 2017 financial audit of the District by Miller Cooper & Co. resulted in an unqualified opinion, meaning there were no material issues found as part of the audit process. The report noted strong financial management and procedural safeguards.

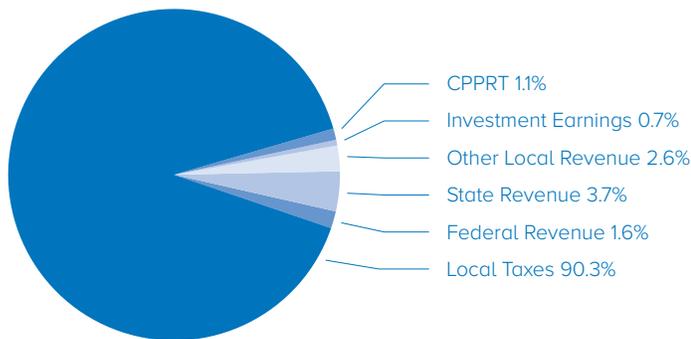
During 2017, the District ran a balanced budget with operating revenues of \$13 million, and expenditures of \$11.9 million. More than 90% of the District's revenues are generated through local taxes,

with approximately 5% coming from the state and federal government. Approximately 80% of the budget directly supports instructional programming.

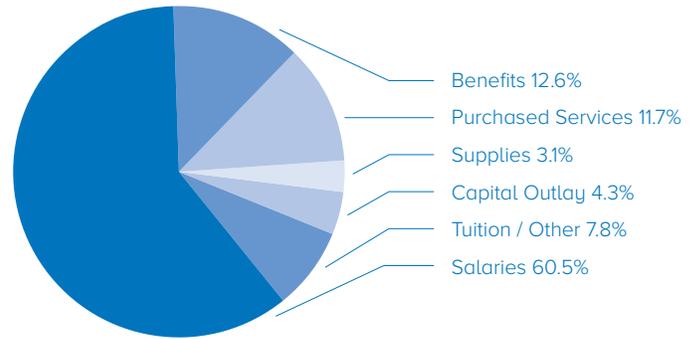
The District will be utilizing monies from its fund balance account to make payments for the new Sunset Ridge School and building improvements at Middlefork School. The Board is committed to maintaining a fund balance of no less than 40% of the projected total revenues.

The District's Annual Independent Financial Audit is available for public viewing via the District website.

FY 17 TOTAL OPERATING FUND REVENUES BY OBJECT



FY 17 TOTAL OPERATING FUND EXPENDITURES BY OBJECT



# DISTRICT SHINES ON ASSESSMENT MEASURES

Superintendent Dr. Ed Stange recently shared with the Board of Education information regarding student academic achievement, school climate, and stakeholder perceptions.

Academic performance data from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests, state-mandated PARCC tests, and New Trier placement tests consistently reflected high levels of student academic growth and achievement in reading and mathematics. District 29 student performance was

commensurate with, or above that, of their peers in the New Trier Township in most grade levels and significantly above state averages at all grades.

School climate data, collected from parent/guardians, staff, and student surveys, yielded high marks for the safe and supportive school environment, staff, communication systems, academic rigor, fine and performing arts programs, and academic and social-emotional support mechanisms.

The report noted opportunities for improvement relative to English and Language Arts instruction, communication systems, and differentiated instruction.

“We are extremely pleased with the overall results and see great opportunities for continued improvement,” said Stange. “We will be utilizing this data to guide the new Strategic Plan goals, a process expected to be completed by the end of the school year.”



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[www.sunsetridge29.org](http://www.sunsetridge29.org)

*Cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

see more at [www.sunsetridge29.org](http://www.sunsetridge29.org)

<b>FEBRUARY</b> <b>13</b>	<b>Education Committee Meeting</b> Sunset Ridge School	6:00 p.m.
<b>FEBRUARY</b> <b>13</b>	<b>Board of Education Meeting</b> Sunset Ridge School	7:00 p.m.
<b>MARCH</b> <b>1</b>	<b>4th Grade Band, Orchestra, General Music Concert</b> Sunset Ridge School	7:00 p.m.
<b>MARCH</b> <b>13</b>	<b>Education Committee Meeting</b> Sunset Ridge School	6:00 p.m.
<b>MARCH</b> <b>13</b>	<b>Board of Education Meeting</b> Sunset Ridge School	7:00 p.m.
<b>MARCH</b> <b>15</b>	<b>Junior High Concert</b> Sunset Ridge School	7:00 p.m.
<b>APRIL</b> <b>10</b>	<b>Finance and Facilities Committee Meeting</b> Sunset Ridge School	6:00 p.m.

### District 29 Board Members

Adelbert Spaan, President  
 Anne Peterson, Vice President  
 Amanda Alpert Knight  
 Nancy Detlefsen  
 Bill Hayes  
 Jill Mirkovic  
 Scott Subeck

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