



SEARS

Community

Kenilworth School District 38 - Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2024



UPCOMING DATES

Mark your calendar with these upcoming important dates.

- **JULY 22**
Board of Education Committee of the Whole Meeting
- **WEEK OF JULY 29**
Summer School/ESY
- **JULY 30**
Residency Confirmation Day
8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- **WEEK OF AUGUST 5**
Summer School/ESY
- **AUGUST 1**
Board of Education Building & Finance Committee Meeting
- **WEEK OF AUGUST 12**
Summer School/ESY
- **AUGUST 12**
Board of Education Regular Meeting

VISIT THE WEBSITE

www.kenilworth38.org

SUMMER CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

This summer, the school began Phase III of the Master Facilities Plan (MFP), focusing on the original Joseph Sears School building. This phase will take place over the next two summers. The most noticeable changes this summer will occur on the second floor, where classrooms and hallways will receive new flooring, ceilings, lighting, and custom woodwork restoration. These summer updates will pay homage to the building's rich history and architectural character while simultaneously creating modern and flexible spaces. One such new space will be The Joseph Sears School Legacy Room. This space will be a tribute to Sears' namesake and legacy, creating an ongoing learning opportunity for our students. The Legacy Room, located on the second floor, will showcase artifacts honoring the past and present of Sears School and the Village of Kenilworth.

Thanks to our wonderful JSSPVA partners, construction will also take place this summer on the newly named Cornerstone Courtyard, featuring Chill Hill. This project will revitalize the current outdoor space just north of the Ivy Court community entrance into a multi-use green space that students and community members can enjoy. The new courtyard space will feature a tiered brick patio, green turf amphitheater seating, new trees and shrubs, and seating throughout.

Other Phase III updates taking place this summer include:

- **Additional exterior fencing and gates.**
- **New energy-efficient lighting in the Gymnasium.**
- **A new ramp and landing area at the entrance of the Baker Building.**

We are excited to open the doors to the schoolhouse at the start of the new school year and welcome students, staff, and the community into our updated facilities.



Courtyard: A rendition of the new courtyard space Cornerstone Courtyard featuring Chill Hill. This JSSPVA-sponsored project will revitalize the current outdoor space just north of the Ivy Court community entrance into a multi-use green space that students and community members can enjoy.

Hallway: A rendering of the fifth-grade and Fine Arts hallway.



Thank You for Y



REFLECTING ON LEGACY: Bernadette Slovit To Retire After 13 Years At Sears

Bernadette Slovit's remarkable 13-year career at The Joseph Sears School ended at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 school year. For Slovit, the decision to retire was challenging for many reasons, primarily because she cherished her time with her students, her relationships with families, and the opportunity to teach with so many amazing colleagues.

As she reflects on her career, Bernadette notes that some of the most memorable times came from spending time with her students. The day-to-day routine in the classroom is paramount, but the smaller moments stick out the most to her, she explained.

"I cherish having lunch with former students yearly and listening to them share what is happening in their lives. The simple pleasure of hanging out with students and listening to them talk about their interests is a treat," she said.

Student success and achievement have always been of the utmost importance to Bernadette, emphasizing that the connection between teacher and student is crucial to helping students understand and overcome challenges.

"As a teacher, you are always trying to make sure each student reaches their full potential, and when they do, it's the best feeling," she said.

Bernadette explained that educating children is a gift and a responsibility that can never be taken lightly, adding that she is grateful for the opportunity to build relationships with families in the Kenilworth community.

"The relationships I have established with families in the community are something I am grateful for. It has been a pleasure to work with families and problem-solve together strategies that will help their children be successful both in the classroom and in life," she said.

"I am so happy for Bernadette and can't wait to see where she directs her passion and energy going forward. She has already made such a huge impact on this world. I just know that the next chapter of Bernadette's life will be full of gratitude, new experiences, and service to others," fifth-grade teacher Ashley Stanley said.

Fifth-grade teacher Emily Macklin adds that Bernadette's legacy will be one of an incredibly dedicated teacher who treated her students with respect and kindness.

"She goes above and beyond to meet every student's needs and make them feel like they are a part of her classroom community. As a colleague, staff will remember her infectious laugh, her passion for teamwork, and her never-ending support for every one of us," Macklin said.

Superintendent Kate Donegan agreed: "Bernadette is always willing to try new programming, content, or activities. She is very student-centered and has high expectations while forming great relationships. She has an infectious laugh, loves her family, and shares herself with everyone. It has been a pleasure to work with Bernadette, and I wish her much joy in her retirement."

Principal Stephanie Helfand likewise added, "Bernadette is a special person and educator. At Sears, she served in several roles, including student services teacher and classroom teacher. With her unique background, she has created learning experiences for our students that meet each of their needs. If a student needs structure, she provides the structure; if they need a caring approach, she is caring and comforting; if a student needs a laugh - she brings the laughs! She is a role model for her colleagues and will be deeply missed!"

Our Service

SAYING GOODBYE TO SEARS:

Jill Carell Gravenites Retires After 18 Years At Sears

The end of the 2023-2024 school year marked the end of a remarkable career for first-grade teacher Jill Carell Gravenites, who, after 18 years at Sears, made the decision to retire and enter the next chapter of her life.

Jill recounts that, in her career at Sears, she has worked on both fifth- and first-grade teams. No matter what grade level she was teaching, she explained, she always tried to build relationships with students, families, and colleagues.

"I knew I could always lean on my colleagues for support. I am proud of our work to develop new curriculum, differentiate instruction, provide social and emotional support, and honor Sears traditions," she said. "I am proud of how I challenged and encouraged students always to do their best and to advocate for themselves when needed. I worked hard to instill the four cornerstones of The Joseph Sears School."

As she reflects on her career, Jill notes that some highlights from the journey have been working with fifth-grade students on their We The People performances, seeing first-grade students grow in their reading abilities, and collaborating with many colleagues on enhancing the students' learning environment and experience.

In addition to her work in the classroom, Jill also started the Girls on the Run program at Sears, coaching the program for eleven years and supporting other extracurricular activities for students.

"Jill is a positive influence on The Joseph Sears School. She has wonderful relationships with students, families, and colleagues and is always quick with a smile and laugh. We will miss Jill and hope she visits often," Superintendent Kate Donegan said.

Principal Dr. Stephanie Helfand describes Jill as a kind person with an optimistic attitude who brought this energy into the classroom and culture at Sears.

"Jill is also an active person who will let nothing slow her down, and I am excited to see how this shows up for her in retirement," Helfand said.

As her career at Sears ends, Jill explains that being part of an esteemed faculty committed to students' education has been an honor and a privilege. Additionally, Jill imparts some words of wisdom to future generations of teachers at Sears.

"Teaching is a rewarding and fulfilling career," she said. "You will laugh, and you will cry. You will hear from students thirty years later how you made a difference in their lives. As much as I hope I have left a positive impact on my students, they have left a positive impact on me. It is an extremely challenging career, but you will never regret all you gave to help your students succeed."

A NEW BEGINNING

Assistant Principal Marty Heffner Accepts Principal Position in School District 57

This June, The Joseph Sears School bid a fond farewell to Assistant Principal Marty Heffner, who has been hired as the next principal of Westbrook School for Young Learners in Mount Prospect School District 57. As Principal Stephanie Helfand explained at the June meeting of the Board of Education, Marty began working with the Sears team four years ago, in the midst of the pandemic. She noted that the "collaboration and partnership we had at the beginning," when the District was facing the challenge of many state regulations and "very few schools were open, . . . really set us off on [an] amazing course" together.



Then-President of the Board of Education, Bill Graham, thanked Mr. Heffner for his service to the school, calling him an "incredible professional" who always had an "infectious" "smile on his face." Junior Kindergarten educator Tracey McDowell, who stated that she is going into her thirtieth year as a teacher and has had the opportunity to work with many strong administrators, similarly noted that "Marty has become a special administrator as he grew in his position at Sears. We've been very fortunate to have him working with our kids, our families, and our teachers. While I wish him the best in his new position, his presence and leadership will be missed here at Sears."

Parents appreciated Marty's efforts, as well. As JSSPVA President Joe Guarino and Past President Lydia Mathas explain, "Marty was the consummate partner to the JSSPVA, always operating with kids' best interests in his sights. He modeled the *Portrait of a Sears Graduate* by his example at every turn. We will sorely miss collaborating with Marty on so many projects and wish him every success in his new appointment!"

Superintendent Kate Donegan added, "I was fortunate to work with Marty for the last six years. He is a student-centered administrator with a bright future. I am proud of the work we have done together and wish him much success."

"Working at Sears has been a truly wonderful experience and a place that will always hold a special place in my heart. Kenilworth is an exceptional community that deeply values and supports education. I am so grateful for my relationships and collaboration with the students, staff, community, JSSPVA, administrative team, and the Board of Education. While I am excited for the next chapter in my journey, it is bittersweet, as I will greatly miss the Sears community," Heffner said.

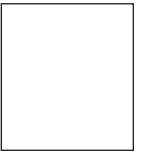
The District wishes Mr. Heffner all the best moving forward in his exciting new opportunity.



The Joseph Sears School

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CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE JOSEPH SEARS SCHOOL CLASS OF 2024!

On behalf of the entire District 38 school community, we would like to congratulate and extend our best wishes to The Joseph Sears School Class of 2024. We wish you the best as you move on to the next chapter of your educational journey. Once a Panther, Always a Panther!

