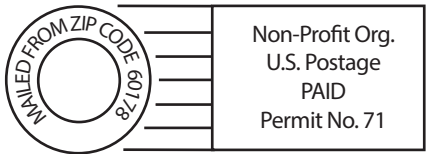


# THE TORCH

 Sycamore Community  
School District 427

245 West Exchange Street  
Sycamore, IL 60178



 Sycamore Community  
School District 427

Feb 2023

# THE TORCH



## BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

All Board of Education  
meetings begin at 7:00 P.M.

Meeting locations vary; please  
check the district website for  
location of the meeting.

**FEB** 14 & 28  
**MAR** 14  
**APR** 11 & 25  
**MAY** 9 & 23  
**JUN** 13 & 27  
**JUL** 11 & 25

## 2023 DAYS OFF

**FEB** 17 & 20  
**MAR** 27-31  
**APR** 7 & 10



## SCAN ME!

Or visit [syc427.org/  
resources/news-  
events/calendar](https://syc427.org/resources/news-events/calendar)

## In this Issue



Sycamore agriculture teachers Mr. Christian  
Thurwanger and Mrs. Kara Poynter accept the  
Outstanding Middle/Secondary Agriculture  
Education Program Award from the National  
Association of Agricultural Educators.





## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Steve Wilder

Greetings from Sycamore CUSD #427! 2023 brings a new calendar year, and it also brings a re-launch of our district newsletter, The Torch. Over the years, The Torch has served as a means of communicating with you, our Spartan community. This includes families who have students in our schools, as well as homes that may have previously had students in our schools, those of you who are new to our community, and everyone else in Sycamore.

There are a number of exciting things happening in our schools. Last fall, the Illinois State Board of Education released the annual school report cards. These report cards include information from the previous year, such as enrollment, demographics, performance on state tests, and district financial information. Included in the report card is a designation for each school. There are four designations: Comprehensive Support, Targeted Support, Commendable, and Exemplary. I'm proud

to share that all seven of our schools were designated as "Commendable." This means that none of our student groups (based on student demographics) were under-performing, our graduation rate is higher than 67% (our graduation rate was actually 92%), and each school is performing up to the 90th percentile of schools in Illinois. This is a result of the hard work of our students, staff, and families. Way to go, Spartans!

One of the initiatives we are working on that may help us reach the "Exemplary" designation is implementing "Personalized Learning" district-wide. This can take a variety of forms, and we are working with the Institute for Personalized Learning (I4PL) to develop a model for Sycamore. The I4PL describes personalized learning as an approach to learning based on individual student readiness, strengths, areas of improvement, and interests. In this approach, students are not only learners but active participants in their learning by goal-setting and monitoring their own progress. In the end, this approach allows us to support students to reach their personal potential because their path to learning will be unique to them. This process will take a few years to implement, and it will be something that we will always be tweaking and developing as our understanding of teaching and learning expands. I'm excited about what this means for our students; be on the lookout for more information as the process unfolds.

One of the other initiatives we are working on this year is a review of the elementary

school boundaries. In a community like ours, this is something that needs to be done from time to time as the population grows. The last time it was done in Sycamore was just prior to the opening of North Grove Elementary in 2009. Since then, there has been continued growth in our community, although that growth didn't necessarily take place in the manner we projected that it would. That's left us with enrollment in some schools that is closer to capacity than others. That, in turn, has forced us to utilize our resources in a less effective manner. Based on our work this fall, we've identified some options that will allow us to balance enrollment, make better use of our resources, and still live within some of our structures (for example, transportation). We have held meetings at each of our elementary schools to share our work to date, gather feedback from you, and finalize our recommendation for the Board of Education. At this time, I anticipate implementing any changes at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year barring any unforeseen challenges.

I want to thank you all for all you do to support our schools. Maybe you volunteer in your student's elementary classroom, or maybe you attend our extracurricular programs in support of our students. And I know many of you contribute to our schools financially in a variety of ways. Regardless of how you support our schools, it doesn't go unnoticed. "Spartan Pride" is one of the things that makes Sycamore so unique, and we couldn't do it without you! From all of us to each and every one of you, best wishes for a fantastic 2023! *Go Spartans!*



## AGRICULTURE PROGRAM AWARDED OUTSTANDING MIDDLE/SECONDARY PROGRAM FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS

August 12, 2022

Since 1929, agriculture has been an integral component of education in Sycamore Community School District 427. The district's agriculture program continues to grow its offerings and forward-thinking practices in the classroom and the field. In recognition of its success, the program was recently awarded the Outstanding Middle/Secondary Program Award for Region IV from the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE). The work of students, staff, and the community of Sycamore have all contributed to this national recognition.

When agriculture teacher Mrs. Kara Poynter was hired at Sycamore High School (SHS) in 2007, she was the only teacher in the program and worked part-time. Since then, the program has grown to include three full-time staff members and expanded beyond the high school to reach students at Sycamore Middle School in an eighth-grade introduction to agriculture course...



### SCAN ME!

Or visit [syc427.org/resources/news-events/our-stories](https://syc427.org/resources/news-events/our-stories)

## EMPOWERING ALL LEARNERS TO SUCCEED IN *THEIR* WORLD

### DOOLEY THE THERAPY DOG

October 4, 2022

Dooley the therapy dog joined Sycamore Community School District 427 for his first day on Monday, September 26, 2022. Since then, Dooley and School Resource Officer (SRO) Kaitlyn Pedersen have worked to foster a safe and positive learning environment for all.

Dooley, a one-year-old German Short-haired Pointer, is part of the Sycamore Police Department's (SPD) new therapy dog program to provide mental health and behavioral support within our schools and the community. The goal of this program is to assist individuals during difficult times and manage their stressors.

"We have supported the therapy program since the SPD first proposed it to us, and we are excited for the work Dooley will do for our students, staff, and community," said Superintendent Steve Wilder...



### SCAN ME!

Or visit [syc427.org/resources/news-events/our-stories](https://syc427.org/resources/news-events/our-stories)



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS GROW AS SPARTANTV JR. WELCOMES ALL FIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

January 2, 2023

Athletics and activities are typically most numerous for students in middle school and high school. Nearly eight years ago, elementary teacher Jon Walter sought to bring additional opportunities to his students.

"I wanted to start an after-school program at the elementary school level that allowed students to collaborate with each other and build new relationships," said Walter. With a passion for technology, an interest in news production, and the recipient of several generous community grants, Walter and his colleague Michael Choragwicki started the after-school program that became SpartanTV Jr.

Each week, students come together to practice in front of and behind the camera. Then, students participate in one of several recording days to capture news stories for the monthly newscast...



### SCAN ME!

Or visit [syc427.org/resources/news-events/our-stories](https://syc427.org/resources/news-events/our-stories)