

Nov 2023

# THE TORCH

## In This Issue



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## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Steve Wilder

Greetings! As the leaves begin to fall and the weather gets cooler, we hope you're all enjoying the fall season and looking forward to the upcoming holidays. The 2023-2024 school year is off to a wonderful start. We want to take this opportunity to thank our students and staff for their hard work and dedication, as well as the support of our families and the

entire Sycamore community. Life absolutely offers more in Sycamore!

As we work through the first semester, we're engaging in some strategic planning to ensure that we're on track to meet our goals... For many years, our school district has aligned our efforts with our Strategic Design, which is available on our website. The Strategic Design has been through multiple revisions, but it continues to reflect our mission, vision, core values, and more. Because of the breadth of the document, it doesn't always give us the focus and specificity that can help us drive our efforts.

We will be working with Educational Leadership Solutions to review our Strategic Design, gather feedback from our community, and then develop goals and action plans to focus our efforts in key areas such as instruction, technology, facilities, finances,



and more. We believe this project will give us the direction we need to continue to improve and grow as a district and empower learners to succeed in their world for years to come. Look for more information about that process as the semester progresses. **Go Spartans!**



## EVY BINGLE SELECTED AS A 2023-24 SCHOLASTIC KIDS REPORTER

September 29, 2023

Evy Bingle, a 5th grader at Southeast Elementary School, has recently been selected as a 2023-24 Scholastic Kids Reporter. Scholastic officially welcomed 28 student journalists (ages 10 to 14) from around the world to their award-winning program for the upcoming school year. Evy is the only student from Illinois who was selected. These students will be covering a wide range of topics and will be interviewing newsmakers to report on real-world events.

Being selected as a Scholastic Kids Reporter is no small feat, and Evy's achievement is a testament to her dedication, hard work, and passion for journalism. As a current SpartanTV Jr. student, she has had the opportunity to build her skill set through participation in the after-school club open to 4th and 5th grade students in Sycamore Community School District 427.



## EXPLORING LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION WITH PLAY ACADEMY

October 5, 2023

Sycamore Community School District 427 has recently launched the PLAY (Professional Learning and You) Academy, an initiative aimed at exploring learner-centered education. The purpose of the Academy is to give staff a platform to experiment with learner-centered education, grow in their understanding, and share insights with like-minded colleagues. The ultimate goal is to learn more about what learner-centered education looks like and scale it up for the entire district over time. The Academy started this year and is already generating a lot of excitement among staff members.

"I have seen many students struggle with the traditional structure of school and the expectations of learning within the

classroom. When PLAY Academy was presented, I thought of all of my students who succeed in non-traditional formats, and what a great change we can make to our classrooms to help everyone succeed," said Mrs. Victoria Maas, 4th Grade Teacher at Southeast Elementary School.

Learner-centered education is all about placing the student at the center of the learning process. This means that learning takes precedence over teaching, and students have some say in what they learn, how they learn, or how they show what they have learned.



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## BREAKING THE STIGMA: THE STUDENT-ATHLETE SUPPORT COALITION AT SYCAMORE HIGH SCHOOL

October 13, 2023

*Content Warning: This story mentions sensitive mental health topics, including suicide.*

Over the last year, there has been a growing desire for change surrounding conversations about student-athlete mental health at Sycamore High School. The passion to have these conversations sparked action, and from that action came a new support group: the Student-Athlete Support Coalition. Formed after its founding staff members, Mrs. Spicer, Mark Holstein, Ashley Jordan, and Luke Spicer, recognized this desire, the coalition aims to encourage

student-athletes to have more open conversations about the mental health struggles they face.

Mrs. Spicer, who co-presented on the coalition during a board meeting on September 12, 2023, said that over the past year, she had been confronted with stories from parents of student-athletes who have lost their students to suicide. A common thread through these stories

was that these students often displayed little to no warning signs, instead presenting as successful athletes who seemed to have it all together. "We need to start talking about this," said Mrs. Spicer. She began to reach out to other staff members at the high school to see if they would be interested in working to face this reality with the student-athletes of Sycamore High School. That's when she found support from Holstein, Jordan, and Luke Spicer — all of whom were excited to address the need and ready to get to work. The group began to brainstorm how they could talk about the topic of mental health among the high school's student-athletes, an important issue when over 60% of the school's population falls within that category. "How can we impact and reach those students to start to break the stigma?" became the guiding question of the group, said Mrs. Spicer.



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## GRANTING NEW LEARNING POSSIBILITIES AT SYCAMORE MIDDLE SCHOOL

October 24, 2023

Over the summer, Sycamore Middle School (SMS) was awarded a grant from the DeKalb Data Center (Meta). Kevin Boltz, a teacher of Career Technology Education, submitted the application on behalf of SMS that would eventually be selected as an inaugural recipient of Meta's Community Action Grants. Our Communications Department recently followed up with Mr. Boltz to hear how this grant initiative has taken off at the middle school this school year.

What inspired you to apply for a Community Action Grant?

Boltz: The mission of Sycamore Middle School's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) program is to inspire and cultivate innovative thinking in all students. We achieve this by fostering a student-centered learning environment that enhances 21st-century skills through an interdisciplinary and technologically enriched curriculum. Our department takes great pride in diligently adhering to this mission through our curriculum choices and the acquisition of various cutting-edge technologies. Over the past five years, we have been able to secure support from both local and federal grants, which have enabled us to enhance our technological resources significantly.

We believe that the objectives of the Meta Data Center Community Action Grant are closely aligned with our goal of expanding the reach and impact of our STEM/CTE program. Meta, as an organization, is dedicated to investing in projects that harness the potential of technology for the greater good of the community. They are committed to bridging the digital divide, both online and offline, and enhancing local STEM education. This alignment between our program's mission and Meta's goals makes us enthusiastic about the potential collaboration that can result from this partnership.

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



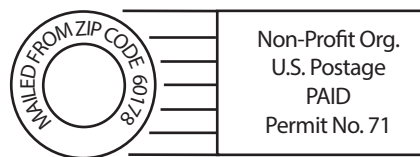
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# THE TORCH



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Sycamore, IL 60178



\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*\*\*

RESIDENTIAL POSTAL CUSTOMER

## COMMUNITY PERCEPTION SURVEY

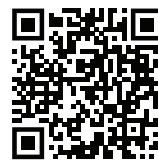
Over the last year, the Board of Education has discussed the possibility of engaging in strategic planning to ensure that our efforts are focused and that we provide the best opportunities for our students. For many years, the district has utilized our Strategic Design, and we will continue to do so.

This survey will require a small amount of time for you, but the feedback we will be able to gain from the survey is invaluable. We would greatly appreciate your time to complete the survey. **This survey will close on Thursday, November 30.**



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Or visit [syc427.co/CommunitySurvey](https://syc427.co/CommunitySurvey)



**SCAN TO VIEW OUR STRATEGIC DESIGN**

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