
SHERRARD C.U.S.D. 200



2024 STATE OF THE DISTRICT

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION BY: SUPERINTENDENT DR. CARL JOHNSON



Introduction

In this State of the District Report, I will review the events of the preceding calendar year and share my analysis of various aspects of our school district. These aspects include district finances, the staff, the students, our academic programs, facilities and transportation. I am proud to continue recognizing the long history and traditions of success and achievement of the Sherrard School District!

Warm regards,



Dr. Carl Johnson
Superintendent,
Sherrard CUSD #200

2023-24 Summary - Things to Note

Pandemic Funding Ends

The few remaining pandemic impacts were primarily financial.

- The school district retained 2 additional nurses hired in 2021.
- The District continued to utilize and fully expend the three grants from the Federal government to help support the costs associated with the pandemic. Those grants included:
 - Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Grant: \$190,884
 - Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief II Fund: \$741,239
 - LEA American Rescue Plan: \$1,737,913

District Level News:

- For the fifth year in a row (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023), Sherrard received “Recognition Level” for its Financial Profile Rating given by the Illinois State Board of Education, the highest attainable (see attachment 1a).
- Construction of the Board approved projects have been completed! Using the district’s bonding capacity, we have been able to make repairs, renovations and additions to the district facilities.
- The issue of General Obligation Refunding School Bonds will be paid off in 12 years.
- With the assistance of the district’s auditing firm Bohnsack and Frommelt LLC, the district again strengthened its internal controls, eliminating past repeated findings.
- The district’s Bullying Plan continues to be followed, with an informational video produced and posted online. The Plan is revised bi-annually.
- Five Board members and the superintendent attended the annual Board Convention in Chicago. Recognized as one of the nation's largest state education conferences, the Joint Annual Conference is an excellent training event for school board members, administrators, and business officials. Our Board of Education President presented at one of the sessions as well!

- In what has become a tremendous display of generosity, the Looser Flake Charitable Foundation Board again granted our district funds for education and technology-related purchases. The following is a brief description of the items that were obtained with grant money.
 - This year we received \$47,000 to be used for updating our updated LEGO robotics programs across the district, new chromebooks and tech items for our elementary labs, additional interactive Clevertouch boards in classrooms, and EXACT PATH curriculum which is a personalized learning platform for all students K-6.
 - Additional \$10,196 received from the Looser-Flake Foundation Creative Arts Grant for Microphones and stage lighting.
 - Over the past five years, this generous contribution has totaled over \$445,000 for Technology, Innovation and Curriculum!
- The caretakers of the Lowell N. Johnson Charitable Foundation again gave our district \$15,000 to be used by the K-6 buildings for equipment and supplies.
- The Veterans Day Ceremony hosted at the Sherrard High School was well-attended with every building in attendance, veterans as honored guests, and community members.
 - Students from across the district honored veterans through performance - singing patriotic songs, band students played, a patriotic display by the art club and video created and produced by STV media students.
 - Special this year, Staff Sgt. Sarah Stranton and Senior Airman William Yemm conducted a flag folding demonstration while school board member, Lieutenant Colonel in the Illinois Air National Guard Aaron Dominique explained the meaning of each fold.
 - Speakers were Lt. Col. Michael Burns and Congressman Eric Sorensen. It was live-streamed from the district Facebook page for those unable to attend. Local tv stations were on-site and covered the event.
- Tiger Talent recipients each month were honored with a video produced and aired during school board meetings. Their colleagues and students were interviewed on camera and spoke on their behalf about their qualities that set them apart. WQAD TV came to do a story on Sherrard Supervisor Kathy Slattery following the board meeting when she was honored.
 - Recipients were: June - Mike Mendoza (District Resource Officer), May - Kathy Slattery (Sherrard Elementary Supervisor), March - Cindy Steckel (District Speech Pathologist), February - Joe Veronda (Junior High history teacher), January - Lacey Woodward (High School Secretary/Attendance Clerk), December - Julie Burns, (Winola Elementary first grade teacher), November - Mat Stannke (Sherrard Elementary P.E. teacher), October - Jenn Schultz (Matherville Intermediate special education teacher), and September - DeAnna Bush (Sherrard JH english teacher).
- The BHASED Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program continues to be hosted by Sherrard, with elementary students at Winola and intermediate students at Matherville.
- Singer Tyler Schute (Class of 2012) was the commencement speaker at our graduation ceremony.

Curriculum Related

- Social Emotional Learning
 - Closegap implementation

- MooZoom implementation
- SHS SEL curriculum (in SPARKS program)
- Elementary
 - Exact Path curriculum by Edmentum is in year 1 of implementation. This is a differentiated, personalized learning platform where students enhance their skills based on Illinois learning standards while learning at their own pace at their own level regardless of the current grade in school.
- SPARKS program success
- Every junior and senior high course has been reviewed and articulated with state curriculum requirements.
- The District started a transition to Student Led Conferences, away from the traditional Parent/Teacher conferences. This is a step forward in encouraging students to take a leadership role in their learning activities.

Facilities Related

- The District was again approved for a \$50,000 School Maintenance Grant
- During 2023-24, the District completed facility work budgeted at \$14 million. Funding sources included a bond, sales tax revenue, property tax revenue, Federal COVID relief money, a school maintenance grant, and cash reserves.
- The Sherrard Grade School expansion project was completed in time for 2nd semester. We hosted an exciting ribbon cutting ceremony this past winter. The excitement of seeing the 1st significant expansion in the district over the past two decades shows!

Staff Related

- The administrators have continued promoting staff wellness using the book *The Happiness Advantage*. This text has been extensively used in improving the District's climate and culture, a need determined by staff survey.
- On the last staff attendance day, everyone was allowed to leave 3 hours early if they donated \$5 for each hour. We raised over \$1600! The money was donated to the academic foundation.
- In May, bus driver Rose Smith kept her bus full of students safe with quick thinking during a derecho and tornado weather event in Coyne Center. Television media followed up to interview her and several students about her heroic actions that calmed students' fears and got them to safety following bus safety protocol.
- The following staff members retired in May, 2024:
 1. Julie Burns (Winola)
 2. Kim McCreight (SHS)
 3. Jane Schultz (SJrHS)
 4. Russell Jenkins (SHS)

Student Related

- Three seniors earned College Board National Recognition. They received the National Rural and Small Town Award because of their GPA of 3.5 or higher and outstanding performance in the PSAT/NMSQT®, PSAT™ 10, and/or AP® Exams. Congratulations to, Kyler Gross, Isabelle Estes and Samantha Phipps.

- Boys Golf IHSA Regional Champs - Andrew Boland advanced to compete at State as an individual.
- FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) packed and donated 16 Operation Christmas Child boxes in collaboration with the Samaritan's Purse.
- Three made ILMEA State Choir, James Campbell, Senior (Bass 2) was selected to the All-State Choir and Mackenzie Volkert, Sophomore (Alto 1) and Josh Orlovski, Senior (Bass 2) were selected for the Honors Choir. They represented Sherrard at the All-State Concert and the Honors Concerts.
- HS Band & Choir both earned Division 1 Ratings at the recent IHSA Organizational Contest.
- Senior Jorja Dirksen was accepted into the University of Iowa UI REACH program (Realizing Educational and Career Hopes). Her mom, Jennifer, orchestrated a surprise for her in teacher, Liza Tucker's classroom, where a group of teachers and staff from her high school career gathered to show their support for Jorja - and congratulate her. Local television stations followed up with the story and interviewed Dirksen, her family and teachers about how she has overcome medical and learning disability obstacles to advance to her secondary education. She was one of a small number accepted into the program - out of thousands of applicants.
- During Sherrard High's 2024 Achievement Night, 76 students (freshmen-seniors) were awarded scholarships and department awards totaling thousands of dollars given by multiple organizations and alumni.
- 13 Matherville students were chosen to perform with the ILMEA All-State Elementary Choir in Peoria in January. Students had to audition and were selected by ILMEA state officials.
- The Sherrard HS Welding Team won the Black Hawk College 6th Annual T-Joint Fillet Weld Invitational at the college's Welding and Skilled Trades Center in downtown Kewanee - for the third year in a row.
- Stephanie Hampton's 3rd grade class from Winola Elementary interacted with students across the country in Montclair California as penpals and "zoom pals" throughout the year. They learned Spanish elements to connect with the 2nd grade spanish-speaking students. WQAD covered a story about the unique connections being made - showcasing collaborative and cross-curricular learning.
- FFA Horse Judging
 - The team comprised of Kylie Foster, Lily Passno, Alexis Wehrheim and Andrew Wehrheim represented our chapter and the state of Illinois in the 2023 National FFA Horse Judging contest. The team finished in 3rd place beating 44 other state champion teams.
 - To accomplish this feat, they judged halter classes where they evaluated the horses on confirmation, balance, muscling and correctness of structure. They also judged performance or riding classes. The team members had to know point deductions and disqualifications for breaks in pattern for each of the potential classes that might be judging.
 - They also had to give multiple sets of oral reasons where they had to memorize their sets on pre-selected classes and present them to a judge. On top of that, these 4 young adults completed an extensive equine knowledge exam, identified horse breeds and tack items. The team also were given a scenario on an current issue in the horse industry. They had 10 minutes to prepare a 10 minute oral presentation. In that 10 minute prep period, they had to break down the scenario, assign parts and individually

practice their part. They had to use their own knowledge of the horse industry and were not allowed to use any outside material.

- This contest was held over a 2 day period during the National FFA convention.
- IPA Awards- WG: Maddy Bruning & James Rinehardt; SG: Madalyn Breiby & Hudson Bohnert; JH: Alexander Serre & Kylie Mathis; MV: John Churchill & Alaina Volkert ; SHS: Mara Franklin & Vincent Wiley
- Contig Champ from SGS: Ryker Fullerlove
- SHS Illinois State Scholars: Riley Cabor, Mara Franklin, Kyler Gross, James Hart, Jordan Juras, Autumn Kongkousonh, Lillian Russell, Vincent Wiley, Carter Wynn
- 13 Sherrard Student-Athletes Sign to Play Next Level
- Volleyball made it to the Regional Championship game, hosted here at Sherrard
- Boys' Basketball made it the Regional Championship game
- Wrestling
 - Nadia Anderson qualified for IHSA Girls State Wrestling.
 - Bri Bynum was the IWCOA (Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials Association) State Champion at 130lbs
- Girls Track State Medalists
 - Pole Vault- Aliza Dominique
 - Discus- Sadie Shemek
 - 4x400- Cami, Anderson, Beth Churchill, Aliza Dominique, Lilly Russell
 - 4 x800- Madison Mathis, Evelyn Weakley, Anna Churchill, Beth Churchill
- JH Girls Basketball
 - 8th grade Girls Regional Champions
 - 7th grade Girls Regional Champions
- JH Wrestling State Qualifiers
 - Quinn Zimmerman
 - Landon Clark
- JH State Track Medalists
 - Charlotte Meskam(8th grade) – 7th Shot put, 8th in Discus
 - Landon Clark(8th grade – 4th in Shot put

Community Resources/Partnerships:

- Grants and Funding
 - Lowell Johnson Charitable Foundation
 - Sherrard Academic Foundation
 - Looser-Flake Charitable Foundation
- Area Fire Departments
 - Supporting fire drills and safety awareness
- Libraries
 - SG: Library director attends/presents at Career Day and hosts 1st grade Field Trip (EOY)
- Y Before and After School Care Program
 - Continued AM/PM availability at SGS
- Ag in the Classroom
 - Monthly presentations for 2nd grade students and end of the year horse visit

- Expanded our Ag program to Sherrard JrHS!
- Junior Achievement
- Connected with multiple classrooms throughout the district to provide financial literacy instruction
- Mercer County Historical Society
 - 4th grade Field Trip, Lincoln poster contest
- Health:
 - Weekly updates on overall COVID cases/absences/impact for school year
 - Dental Bus (ToothMobile) visiting district during Spring
- Family Support:
 - Families of students attending WG stepped up to make sure that every student in the school received a school shirt for purple and gold days. Most students were able to buy one (at cost), and those unable to purchase were still provided one using the gracious donations of others.

Transportation Related

- The Board approved the purchase of two new buses for a total of \$287,115.
- The District purchased & continues to implement StopFinder transportation software. The features of the new software include GPS systems on all buses and an app allowing parents to see schedules and get notifications when the route is near their stop.
- The Board approved the purchase of a new driver's education SUV at a cost of \$30,631.

Finance Related

- The district's finances continue to be strong. As mentioned in the "Things to Note" section above, the Illinois State Board of Education gave the district its highest Financial Profile Rating with a score of 3.8. See attachments 1a and 1b.
- Prior to purchasing district bonds, Sherrard obtained a rating from Standard and Poor's. This favorable AA-/Stable rating allowed us to attract more investors, giving us a lower interest rate for the bonds.
- The District's operating expense per pupil is \$11,808.
- The Preschool For All Grant included a one-time increase of \$73, 471
- Investment Funds- Interest rates for the district Money Market and CDs were renegotiated to capture a maximum amount of revenue, exceeding \$1,000,000 over the past two years.

Final Analysis

Academic Analysis

Our district, from the Pre-K level to the high school has a wonderful, broad array of classes and experiences for our students. I feel we must continue to find ways for partnerships and pathways for our students through vocational courses, fine arts courses, high academic courses, and business-related courses. Our most significant challenge is to overcome the teacher shortage/vacancy issues that we are facing, particularly at the secondary levels. We will continue

to seek out the new teachers who are able to provide our students with the quality education Sherrard has always provided.

The addition of a curriculum coordinator has been tremendous. Steve Miller is starting his second year and has moved to ensure we are transitioning to consistent, effective, research based means to increase student achievement. Our instructional technology is phenomenal for a district this size and our IT framework is being upgraded to ensure we are ready for the future.

- New fiber lines are currently in the final phase of completion between the high school and all other buildings in the district.
- Over 120 access points have now been installed and configured in each school building
- Similar to elementary classrooms, junior high classrooms now each have a cart of Chromebook dedicated to each classroom to recapture the learning environment.
- Future plans include upgrades to technology infrastructure in terms of new switches, battery backups, and server upgrades.
- Transitioned a part-time IT support tech to full-time.

We have made continuous improvement of technology a goal and continue to offer any and all professional development needed to staff to ensure we take advantage of advances.

Student Analysis

- Sherrard low income average was 31% – the state’s low income average 49%
- Sherrard students with IEPs 11% - the state average is 18%
- Sherrard drop-out rate is 1% - state’s drop-out rate 4%
- Sherrard student chronic absenteeism is 17.2% – State chronic absenteeism is 28.3%
- Our student demographics are relatively stable and the vast majority of the students are compliant, hard-working and well-behaved.
- Student enrollment has somewhat stabilized falling within a 25 student range over the past three years. Enrollment is still declining though.

Staffing Analysis

- Sherrard student to teacher ratio elementary 22:1 – state’s ratio 21:1
- Sherrard student to teacher ratio high school 18:1 – state’s ratio 21:1
- Sherrard average teacher salary \$55,444
- Sherrard teachers with master’s degree 48%
- Sherrard teacher retention rate 85% - state’s average 90.2%
- This is the first year of a 3-year contract with the SEA.
- The teacher shortage issue is nationwide and will likely continue to worsen in the coming years. Illinois has been impacted less than our neighboring states for a variety of reasons, but we are still feeling the effects.
- Sherrard was selected to be a participant in a Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot program last year due to our number of open positions. We are hopeful this can have a lasting impact.

Transportation Analysis

- Like most districts in America, we continue to have a critical shortage of substitute bus drivers.
- Our bus fleet is in good working order and the cycle for replacing buses is adequate. Our mechanics are able to fix most problems and our bus garage is adequate for maintaining the vehicles.
- We continue to replace two buses per year, rotating out the most worn in our fleet.

- The finances for the transportation department are solid.

Facilities Analysis

Our district contains excellent buildings that are among the best in the area! The Board has made a commitment to the community to work towards provide the very best opportunities and it certainly shows in our facilities. Over my 1st two years here, the \$14,000,000 repair, renovation, and expansion project is a testament to this commitment.

Maintaining the facilities has been a focal point of the district as well. Our maintenance team and outside contractors have teamed up to make sure our top-notch facilities stay that way! Ken Hoffman with Outdoor Innovations has done an incredible job maintaining the landscaping. The District has also worked to keep the parking lots freshly sealed and striped within a rotating schedule.

Future projects to consider include: new floor tile at Sherrard Elementary and Matherville Intermediate; ceiling tiles, metal grid work and lights need to be replaced in many buildings; the JrHS/HS building still has some roof areas that need replaced; the playground equipment at Winola and Matherville needs some work; Matherville needs a bigger parking lot; our district could use always use another heated storage building; the parking in front of the high school needs to be expanded; the SHS Courtyard project is one step closer to reality as well.

Finance Analysis

Property values (EAV) in the district continue to increase resulting in strong property tax revenue. Due to this increase in EAV, the Board has been able to lower the tax rates. To a certain extent, that makes our district even more attractive when compared to other local districts. Given the educator shortage and recruitment challenges, we will likely need to maintain it so that we can meet these financial challenges that are sure to come in the future.

Revenues are strong right now both due to the EAV situation and the Evidence Based Funding System created by the state of Illinois. However, the past shows us that strong revenues will not last. Inevitably, the District will be forced to implement budget reduction measures. If we fail to plan for this while times are good, we risk the wonderful things that have been accomplished with our collective efforts. The district will need to maintain cash reserves to ensure finances are somewhat “cushioned” against tough times.

Closing Remarks

The Sherrard School District has been placed in an excellent spot by the Board of Education and its solid financial leadership. As a product of this very school system, I have a sense of pride and responsibility that goes much farther than my job title.

We have a phenomenal community, staff and Board of Education; I feel that the continued support from the community is what sets us apart from many districts in the state. In short, we are entrusted by the community to make it a better place each and every day. When I was given the opportunity to lead this district, I thought my professional dream had come true. After serving this district for the past 2+ years, I am sure of that.

While our District faces many difficult realities present in today’s educational world, I have complete faith we will not just survive, but thrive. My unwavering, overarching goal is to enhance the district and make it impossible for anyone else in the area to ignore; when new families come to this area, we are working to guarantee the Sherrard District to be the first and last place they look.

Financial Profile Score

The Illinois State Board of Education has developed the School District Financial Profile to help monitor the finances of school districts and identify which are moving toward financial difficulty. Five indicators are individually scored and weighted in order to arrive at a Total Profile Score. The results are slotted into a category of a four, three, two or one with four being the highest and best category possible.

Since 2003, Sherrard has received the “Recognition” designation in all but three years (2005, 2006, 2009) when we received the “Review” designation. The score range for “Recognition” is 3.54-4.00. Our FY24 score was 3.80. We have received a perfect score (4.0) on six occasions (2011, 2012, 2013, 2019, 2020, 2021). The score is based on five criteria.

Indicators

1. Fund Balance to Revenue Ratio – The result of dividing the ending fund balances by the revenues for the Ed, O&M, Transportation and Working Cash funds.
2. Expenditure to Revenue Ratio – Computed by dividing total expenditures for the Ed, O&M and Transportation funds plus Working Cash.
3. Days Cash on Hand – The number of days a district could meet operating expenditures provided no additional revenues were received.
4. Percent of Short-Term Borrowing Ability Remaining – The sum of unpaid Tax Anticipation Warrants divided by 85% of the EAV multiplied by the tax rates for the Ed, O&M and Transportation funds.
5. Percent of Long-Term Debt Margin Remaining – The District’s EAV multiplied by its maximum general obligation debt limitation, reduced by any outstanding long-term debt.

Financial Profile Designation

Financial Recognition (highest rating)	3.54 – 4.0
Financial Review	3.08 – 3.53
Financial Early Warning	2.62 – 3.07
Financial Watch (lowest rating)	1.00 – 2.61

* Financial profile figures for Sherrard School District can be found on the last page.

Overview of Finances

Fund balances	
Ed Fund	\$8,090,966
O&M Fund	\$1,087,954
Transportation	\$1,204,815
Tort	\$12,428
IMRF/FICA	\$813,690
*Working Cash	\$856,811

History of district balances (cash reserve)

2023	\$12,073,064
2022	\$11,368,959
2021	\$10,469,325
2020	\$10,793,783
2019	\$9,299,785
2018	\$7,108,372
2017	\$8,239,239
2016	\$8,277,867
2015	\$8,877,680
2014	\$8,987,641
2013	\$8,403,408
2012	\$8,152,993
2011	\$7,425,081
2010	\$5,859,426

Tax Year	Total Rate	EAV
2016	4.8322	\$153,888,269
2017	4.7084	\$163,613,583
2018	4.6324	\$166,787,928
2019	4.6534	\$174,221,320
2020	4.5938	\$181,505,381
2021	4.4924	\$190,930,049
2022	4.3700	\$203,061,008
2023	4.3084 (Est)	\$216,110,790

Sherrard Student Enrollment

Year	Enrolled	Increase/Decrease
1989	1817	
1990	1814	-3
1991	1771	-43
1992	1782	11
1993	1806	24
1994	1835	29
1995	1919	84
1996	1936	17
1997	1989	53
1998	1886	-103
1999	1893	7
2000	1859	-34
2001	1802	-57
2002	1774	-28
2003	1794	20
2004	1765	-29
2005	1733	-32
2006	1770	37
2007	1751	-19
2008	1627	-124
2009	1590	-37
2010	1566	-24
2011	1559	-7
2012	1595	36
2013	1541	-54
2014	1578	37
2015	1520	-58
2016	1469	-51
2017	1464	-5
2018	1392	-72
2019	1402	10
2020	1375	-27
2021	1381	6
2022	1359	-22
2023	1354	-5

Preliminary FY24 Enrollment by Grade Level			
	SG	WG	Tot.
PreK		67	
K	40	47	87
1	46	35	81
2	46	33	79
3	46	45	91
4	46	40	86
5			93
6			89
7			96
8			92
9			120
10			105
11			129
12			100
Total			1315

Winola annexation took place in the fall of 1988 & peak enrollment was in the 1997/98 school year.