

JAN 2026

THE TORCH

In This Issue



Sycamore Middle School students
showcase innovation and STEM
talent at Makers on the Move.



A LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

As we close out 2025 and look ahead to the year before us, the Board of Education remains firmly committed to advancing the success and well-being of every student, staff member, and family we serve. Guided by our district goals and informed by community priorities, the Board will continue its work to ensure strong stewardship, thoughtful decision-making, and sustained progress across Sycamore Community School District 427.

RECENT BOARD ACTION

In October 2025, the Board of Education approved a redesigned health insurance plan that protects access to providers while generating an estimated \$1.5 million in recurring annual savings for both employees and the district. The Board also voted to redirect a portion of these savings to fund a \$2,500 Valued Service Bonus for all staff members who are eligible for district health insurance as a way to recognize their dedication.



NICHOLAS REINECK
Interim Superintendent

WHAT MAKES SYCAMORE SPECIAL

When I think about the opportunity I've had to serve as superintendent this year, one thing stands out above all else. It's not just the role that has made it meaningful. The true opportunity has been the chance to serve a community like Sycamore.

This is the community my family calls home. It's the place my children go to school and where our schools and neighborhoods blend into something that feels a lot like family. It's a place filled with opportunity, the kind that appears in the smallest moments through the people who make this district what it is.

Throughout this year, I've shared stories with our staff that capture what makes Sycamore so special. Small moments have revealed big truths about who we are — from walking alongside a student who said a staff member's voice made him excited to come to school each day, to being humbled by kindergartners on the soccer field behind Southeast, to seeing an

COMMITTEE WORK

Across all committees, we remain committed to the clear roadmap of our district goals that guides our work. The Learning and Teaching Committee continues to review the English Language Arts (ELA) pilot, explore updates to graduation requirements, and evaluate academic and financial data dashboards that will offer a more transparent look at student performance and fiscal stewardship. The work of the Business Services Committee will guide the development of a comprehensive five-year facilities plan and review the district's debt load and long-term capital needs. The Policy Committee will continue to evaluate updates that reflect current expectations for governance, instructional alignment, financial health, and student opportunities.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As the district moves into the coming year, the Board of Education is focused on several key priorities that will help shape the future direction. This work includes engaging in collaborative negotiations with the Sycamore Education Association, completing the superintendent selection process, and appointing a new Board member to fill a current vacancy. In partnership

entire school rally around one another in times of hardship. I've watched this community lift one another through loss, celebrate new life, and show up in all the ways that matter.

At its core, education is about people.

It's about creating experiences that make students feel seen, known, and valued. It's about supporting one another through difficult times and celebrating together during the joyful ones. It's about a community that fills downtown streets during Pumpkin Fest and fills the gaps for families when life takes an unexpected turn.

Sycamore is more than a district. It's family. It's home. And it's a community that reveals its character in both joyful moments and difficult ones.

There is something uniquely powerful about being part of a community that leads with heart, gives with humility, and lifts one another up. I see it every day in the faces of our students, in the dedication of our staff, and in the partnership of our families.

As I often say to our staff, every day we are given the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. That is a gift we should never take for granted.

To everyone who makes Sycamore what it is, thank you. Thank you for the trust you extend to our schools, for the support you show one another, and for continuing to make this a wonderful place to live, to learn, and to lead.

WE ARE SYCAMORE.

Sincerely,
Nick Reineck



MICHAEL DEVITO
Board President

with District Administration, the Board will also establish district goals for the year ahead to ensure continued alignment and progress. We are proud of what the district has accomplished, but we recognize that there will always be more to achieve. The board and district are committed to continuing this work on behalf of our students, staff, and our community.

Sincerely,
Michael DeVito

SYCAMORE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOWCASE INNOVATION AND STEM TALENT AT MAKERS ON THE MOVE

October 2025

On October 8, 2025, Sycamore Middle School (SMS) students had the opportunity to participate in a community-wide showcase event, Makers on the Move, hosted by the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC) and The Suter Company as part of Manufacturing Month. The event celebrated DeKalb County's deep manufacturing roots and its ongoing commitment to innovation and workforce development.

Students from Sycamore Middle School had the opportunity to showcase a variety of impressive STEM and Career and Technical Education (CTE) projects to community and industry leaders. Students presented woodworking projects, crafted plant stands featuring laser-engraved logo designs, and demonstrated wood turning on lathes to make pens. Additional displays featured robotics, 3D printing, and a promotional spotlight for the annual Science Olympiad, held each March. Using laser engraving on leather patches, students had created a custom Makers on the Move hat that they gifted to the President & CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association.

The school's G-Force all-girls STEM club was also on site, highlighting their hands-on learning and leadership in technology and engineering. Sycamore Middle School TV Production students



STUDENTS AT MAKERS ON THE MOVE

captured the event through video coverage, offering a student-driven perspective of the day's activities.

Staff members supporting the students included CTE teachers Kevin Boltz and Ryan McDonald, TV Production teacher Jill Anderson, science teacher and G-Force club advisor Liz Peterson, and Assistant Principal Justin Hames, who spoke on behalf of the district.

Two Sycamore High School students, Noah Murcia and Morgan Cook, also spoke at the event, reflecting on how their middle school

SYCAMORE HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERS WITH SYCAMORE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR THIRD ANNUAL POWER ACADEMY

December 2025

Sycamore High School is proud to continue its partnership with the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce for the third year of the Power Academy, a program designed to connect students with local business leaders and provide real-world insight into professional skills that build future success.

Students in Mrs. Kara Poynter's Agriculture Senior Career Academy class met with business professionals every other week to learn about essential workplace skills, from communication and teamwork to time management and adaptability. Each session focused on a key "power skill" and gave students the chance to hear directly from industry leaders about how those skills play out in their careers.

"Programs like the Power Academy exemplify what it means to prepare students for life beyond high school. Through our partnership with the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce, students are able to connect classroom learning with real-world application," said Mr. Brian Swanson, Sycamore High School Principal. *"We are incredibly grateful to our local business leaders for investing their time and expertise to help our students build the confidence, professionalism, and skills that will serve them after graduation."*

STEM experiences at SMS sparked their interest in pursuing advanced coursework and future careers in related fields.

"It's just great exposure for our students to be invited to an event like this. They can see what opportunities are out there and also get to show off their skills a little bit too," said Mr. Justin Hames, Sycamore Middle School Assistant Principal. *"The real-world experiences our team has provided for these students are nothing short of amazing. I'm so proud of them all."*

Manufacturing and agriculture have long been cornerstones of DeKalb County's economy. The

This year's Power Academy lineup featured a range of Sycamore's businesses and community organizations:

- **OCTOBER 16, 2025:** Joel Barczak, Owner of Blumen Gardens, shared insights on Resilience & Adaptability.
- **OCTOBER 28, 2025:** Ben Trompeter, Manager of the DeKalb Taylor Municipal Airport, discussed the importance of efficient Problem-Solving.
- **NOVEMBER 6, 2025:** Tate & Lyle staff highlighted the best practices of the Organization.
- **NOVEMBER 13, 2025:** Representatives from the Sycamore Police Department discussed Communication and Interpersonal Skills.
- **NOVEMBER 20, 2025:** Weaver Construction led a session on Time Management, helping students understand the importance of planning, organization, and efficiency on the job site and beyond.
- **DECEMBER 4, 2025:** Upstaging, Inc. closed out the semester with a presentation on Teamwork.

"The POWER Academy represents the best of what can happen when education and business work hand in hand," said Rose Trembl, CEO of the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce. *"By engaging students with our local professionals, we're not only helping them build essential career skills. We are also strengthening the future workforce*

Makers on the Move Bus Tour, organized by the Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA) and Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC), spotlights the importance of these sectors while recognizing manufacturers and farms that have reached centennial milestones.

Sycamore Community School District 427 is proud to have been part of this celebration of innovation, education, and community partnership, and to continue preparing students with the skills, creativity, and confidence to shape the future of our local and global workforce.



THIRD ANNUAL POWER ACADEMY

and fostering a deeper connection between our schools and the Sycamore business community."

Through this ongoing partnership, Sycamore High School and the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce continue to empower students with the skills, confidence, and community connections they'll need to thrive long after graduation.

THE TORCH



1947 Bethany Road
Sycamore, IL 60178



*****ECRWSS*****

RESIDENTIAL POSTAL CUSTOMER

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

All regular Board of Education meetings begin at 7:00 PM.

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

JAN 27
FEB 24
MAR 17
APR 28
MAY 26
JUN 23

2026 DAYS OFF

JAN 19
FEB 13 & 16
MAR 23-27
APR 3 & 6
MAY 25



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