

PLENTY OF PURPOSE



Commemorating the Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn Community School District's new elementary school

- Notes from H-M-S Superintendent Patrick Carlin and elementary Principal Cathy Jochims, Page 2
- 'Flexible and purposeful': See how the modern elementary school will be utilized, Pages 3-4
- First day back: H-M-S Elementary students got acquainted with their new digs on Monday Aug. 24, Page 5
- New year, new tools: H-M-S teachers excited to utilize new facility to fullest, Page 6
- Fourth time was the charm: Looking back at the \$18.9M bond issue that financed the new school, Page 7

Carlin: H-M-S now a 'trailblazer' in K-12 education

BY PATRICK CARLIN
H-M-S SUPERINTENDENT

As we enter into the 2020-21 school, I reflect on how great it is to be a Hawk! I am so fortunate to live in a region of Iowa that supports and promotes great family, community and educational values. As a family, one can enjoy the many walking trails, high school and collegiate athletics and activities, community events, and seasonal activities/events. Whether it is snowmobiling or skiing in the winter, or boating or golfing in the summer, all of these activities promote a sense of community, family and fun.

Just having these experiences make this a great place to live and raise a family. However, what really puts the communities of H-M-S over the top are the additions of a new, world-class school and educational system with more coming. The new state-of-the-art buildings will continue to support the amazing educational activities that are conducted at H-M-S. In addition to the new learning environments, the district has added a new educational framework (Professional Learning Communities) and K-12 math curriculum (Illustrative Mathematics). The H-M-S Board of Directors, staff,



Patrick Carlin has served as H-M-S superintendent since 2018. SUBMITTED PHOTO

students and communities have come together to create an amazing place to live and learn.

I am very proud to be a part of a community/district that has put such a strong emphasis on family, community and learning. I am also very proud to be a part of a community/district that has embraced being a trailblazer in education and model for all communities. I am proud to be a part of a community/district where people strive every day to make an already amazing place even better. In short, I am proud to be an H-M-S Hawk.

Jochims: H-M-S patrons should be proud of district's direction

BY CATHY JOCHIMS
H-M-S ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

Last year the elementary theme was Celebrating the Past, Building the Future. Our future is unfolding as we start this new school year, and what a thrilling time this is to be an H-M-S Hawk.

The students and staff are very excited not only about the new school building and playground, but also the opportunities for learning our new building provides. This truly is something our communities can be proud of.

Someone asked me, "What are you most excited about?" I am excited to have students back in school. I am excited to have a staff that wants to learn more about how to best use our spaces to maximize student learning. Yes, I will admit, it is nice to not have to navigate around buckets in the hall catching water from the roof. Air conditioning is another plus. The natural light coming into the building is a bonus I wasn't fully expecting. The new technology, flexible seating options and handicap accessibility are all positive features to be excited about. The unique design of the classroom area gives teachers the flexibility to teach in small groups, large groups, spread out for learning center rotations, teach in collaboration with other classrooms, and easily share materials. The various teaching modalities are accomplished because of two main factors, physical structure of the building and professional development for staff. Moveable marker board walls, garage door walls, the DaVinci Studios,



Cathy Jochims has served as H-M-S elementary principal since 2014. SUBMITTED PHOTO

shared grade level learning commons and grade level teaming offices are physical structures that enhance learning opportunities. Participating in professional development at the district and building level has given the teachers the tools to effectively meet the students' needs. Teachers have implemented Professional Learning Communities (PLC), are learning about Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and are putting into practice an enhanced literacy curriculum and a new curriculum for math.

So, what am I most excited about? I am most excited about walking the halls, seeing and hearing teachers and students excited about learning. I am excited to be an H-M-S Hawk. The H-M-S communities can be proud of the direction the district is headed. We are all in this together!



H-M-S school board members and administrators pictured front row, from left to right: Board members Dave Vander Broek, Scott Heetland, Chad Lyman and elementary Principal Cathy Jochims. Back row: High school Principal Nathan Hemiller, Superintendent Patrick Carlin, Board member Scott Vollink and middle school Principal Mark Dorhout. Not pictured: Board Member Ryan Haack. MIKE PETERSEN/SENTINEL-NEWS



Two H-M-S Elementary students check out their lockers during an opening house Aug. 17 following a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new building. MIKE PETERSEN/SENTINEL-NEWS



H-M-S Superintendent Patrick Carlin explains a portion of the elementary school on Aug. 17 following the ribbon-cutting ceremony. MIKE PETERSEN/SENTINEL-NEWS

'Flexible and purposeful'

New elementary school is a 'shining light' for H-M-S community

BY NICK PEDLEY

Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn's new elementary school isn't exactly one of a kind, but it's darn close.

The school features a unique "pod style" layout for grades PK-4. The setup will allow teachers to utilize instructional practices they've spent the better part of two years perfecting while the building was being constructed.

"We have an approach that we've been working on that this building supports," said Superintendent Patrick Carlin. "This isn't, 'We move in and change.' This is something we've been building and working on for a while."

Carlin explained the building capitalizes on bringing teachers together in a professional learning community. Spaces have been set up to maximize learning opportunities for students and allow instructors to coningle and have dialogue with one another throughout the day.

"Like any new school, it's got classrooms. However, our teachers are going to set up their classrooms based on instructional and learning styles," Carlin said. "If I need to learn math and work in a lot of small groups, I'm going to a certain classroom for that. It's not necessarily their classroom, it's the classroom they will go to for that type of instruction."

The interior of the building doesn't

resemble a regular school in the traditional sense. Instead of hallways with classrooms off to the side, the aesthetic is much more open.

It's best to think of the building in terms of sections, or pods. Preschool and kindergarten have their own section, as do first and second grades and third and fourth grades. Classroom spaces are situated around a centered co-learning space and removable walls allow two rooms to turn into one.

Each pod also has its own "da Vinci Studio" for hands-on lessons and art projects. The spaces are designed so students can explore and "make a mess," according to Carlin.

The superintendent described the building as "flexible and purposeful."

"There are a lot of things on casters," he said. "Our setup is flexible for the way we instruct and our arrangement is just as purposeful as our instructional approach."

Co-teaching will be an asset in new building

The flexible elementary school will allow instructors to engage in additional co-teaching opportunities. With more flexibility to move around, classrooms can be split up to address students'

See FLEXIBLE, Page 4



It may look like H-M-S teacher Karen Hielkema is standing behind a set of windows, but it's actually a door that lifts up to open into a larger space. The mechanism is one of many features that makes the new elementary building more flexible and adaptable. NICK PEDLEY/SENTINEL-NEWS

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Flexible

From page 3

needs.

“We will be able to separate groups based on skill level so we’re not reteaching kids who know the material, while at the same time spending more attention on kids who need extra time,” Carlin explained. “Our opportunity to enrich that instruction for all kids is greater. Great teachers have been doing that in this district for a long time, but this space allows us to do that more easily.”

Elementary Principal Cathy Jochims expected a noticeable upswing in students’ ability to grasp the curriculum.

“We saw a big difference in students when we did this last year and the teachers were excited about it,” she said. “The physical structure allows you to do that very easily, and we did not have the ability to do that before.”

In short, each instructor will have their own classroom, but they will essentially be a teacher for each student in that grade.

“We’ve been doing that differentiation for a long time, but it was always in isolation at the old building,” Jochims said. “Each teacher in their self-contained room was responsible for doing that for all of their students. Now, the teachers will be able to do a lot more collaboration and sharing of students given their own personal skillsets.”

The building also features two rooms where teachers can gather during breaks and designated lesson-planning periods.

“Teachers have a lot of good conversations when they just get together and talk. We want to capitalize on those

informal conversations,” said Carlin. “You have teachers coming together knowing what each grade level is doing, so you’re seeing a more vertical alignment. You all build on each other, and I think that’s when you start to hit some pretty neat things.”

‘One of two or three in the state’

The elementary school’s pod-style layout is a rarity in Iowa. According to Carlin, H-M-S’s building is “one of two or three in the state.”

Carlin, who accepted the job at H-M-S less than two weeks before the bond issue passed in 2018, said it was exciting to be a part of such a progressive district.

“We’re definitely the model,” he said. “Coming into a district that’s being a trailblazer not only in instructional approach but in the actual learning environment, there will be people coming to Hartley, Iowa in the coming years to see what we are doing and how we are doing it.”

Jochims was over the moon about the facility and was eager to get kids inside the building. She was proud of the district for investing in a 21st Century learning environment that she believes will provide H-M-S Elementary students the best educational foundation they can get.

“The potential that we are offering to our kids is so great. It’s very rewarding to know that we can do that for the kids in our community,” she said. “It really makes you feel proud of the students, proud of teachers and proud of the community. I’m proud to be where we are. It’s a shining light.”



TOP: H-M-S Elementary Principal Cathy Jochims helps a student with a backpack on Monday morning. BOTTOM: Communal space in the middle of each pod section helps classrooms collaborate. NICK PEDLEY/SENTINEL-NEWS



CONGRATULATIONS!

To the communities of Hartley, Melvin, and Sanborn, and to the HMS Community School District: we’re honored to be your construction management partner and wish you all the very best in your new elementary school!

Boyd Jones

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A NEW ERA AT HARTLEY-MELVIN-SANBORN

Students move in on first day of school at district's new elementary building



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: Students change their shoes during a brief break Monday morning. The first lunch of the new school year was served Monday, Aug. 24. Students enjoy the playground at the new H-M-S Elementary school on Aug. 24. There was plenty to explore on the first day of school. NICK PEDLEY/SENTINEL-NEWS

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‘Such a beautiful environment’

Elementary teachers excited about new school’s amenities

BY NICK PEDLEY

You can feel the contrast between Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn’s new elementary school and the old one immediately.

“Climate control is the first thing you notice, and then you notice the openness,” said elementary Principal Cathy Jochims. “The color and natural lighting, it’s just bright and very inviting. The teachers have commented on the sunlight in their room because it’s just so nice.”

Air conditioning and openness are only a few things elementary staff members are looking forward to in their new digs. Both veteran teachers and rookies alike are eager to utilize the facility to its fullest potential this year, even though there might be a brief period of adjustment early on.

“Exciting isn’t even a big enough word to describe it. When you walk through the building, you’re just awestruck. It’s such a beautiful environment,” Jochims said. “I’m excited for when they walk in and see everything. It’ll just be fun to see their reactions. I’ll probably cry.”

Collaboration is key

The main goal of the elementary school’s layout is to foster teamwork, and H-M-S teachers are eager to get the collaborative machine humming.

“Collaboration brings teachers together to analyze and improve their classroom practices,” said kindergarten teacher Julie Swenson. “In the elementary, we have increased our collaboration using the Professional Learning Community (PLC) approach and it has helped us engage in deeper team learning. For students, collaboration fosters the development of new ideas and exposes students to other peer’s viewpoints.”

Third grade teacher Kathy Habben believes better technology in the new school will help build bridges in the classroom for both students and teachers.

“This will create an exciting new learning curve for everyone,” she said. “Teachers will be able to collaborate more often on student growth, while students will benefit from working in small groups with updated resources. Together we will navigate uncharted waters to figure out what works well and what doesn’t.”

As noted by Jochims, open space is key. Instructional coach Ashley Benz said the school’s environment is much more conducive to collaboration than the old elementary was.

“The new building will allow teachers more creativity in the way they set up their learning spaces depending on what projects students are working on. No longer will learning be confined to one room or space,” she said. “Having a variety of learning spaces with the ability to move walls and make spaces bigger or smaller gives teachers more freedom in the way they teach and meet students’ needs.”

With updated facilities, students will enjoy 21st Century learning environment

H-M-S’s old elementary school served several generations of students, but modern teaching methods weren’t easy to implement.

“When the old elementary was created they had no way of knowing what the future would hold for technology,” said Benz. “Rooms were created with



CATHY JOCHIMS



JULIE SWENSON



KATHY HABBEN



ASHLEY BENZ



H-M-S elementary students dig through their lockers during the first day of school on Monday, Aug. 24. NICK PEDLEY /SENTINEL-NEWS

limited outlets and most were along only one wall. As technology has advanced, this kind of setup limited the way we could arrange a room and how many pieces of technology we could be using at one time.”

Those limitations were one of the driving factors behind the bond issue that eventually financed H-M-S’s new PK-4 grade school. The old elementary, constructed in the 1930s and 1950s, made it hard to accommodate a 21st Century learning environment and also created other hurdles.

“No air conditioning led to less learning. The first month of school, we often took drink breaks and sat in front of running fans to cool off before returning to instruction,” recalled Swenson. “Roof leaks forced me to come to school a bit earlier to mop up the classroom floor and soak or roll up the whole group carpet. Oftentimes, I

would collect buckets before morning classroom prep to place in the hallway and catch continued water drips.”

All that will be a thing of the past with the doors now open at the new elementary school.

“I am also thankful that we will no longer have an issue with the number of devices that can be used at one time,” said Benz.

The Hartley native has ties to the old school building that extend beyond her seven years as an H-M-S employee.

“I of course have had some feelings of sadness as I think about the old elementary school and the four generations in my family that have gone through that building, but more than anything, I am excited for what is to come at H-M-S,” she said. “The process was emotional no doubt, but in the end, I believe it happened just the way it was supposed to.”



H-M-S Elementary teachers Julie Swenson, Karen Hielkema and Britta Tewes chat during a break on Aug. 13. Shared teacher spaces are emphasized in the new building, which is focused on professional collaboration. NICK PEDLEY /SENTINEL-NEWS

Looking back at the bond issue that brought us here

Fourth time was the charm for bond measure that paved way for new elementary school

Editor's note: This story originally ran in the April 5, 2018 edition of The Hartley Sentinel/The Everly-News.

BY NICK PEDLEY

As Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" blared from a jukebox inside the Hartley Legion Club Tuesday night, Citizens for HMS organizers Erica Schierholz, Darcy Fritz and Dr. Jill Kunzman didn't try to hide their euphoria after news broke the \$18.9 million bond issue had passed.

"It's a huge relief," Kunzman said in between hugs and high-fives. "This result makes it all worth it. All the craziness and all the campaigning, it paid off today."

Members of Citizens for HMS, a group of parents and concerned residents pushing the bond measure, were gathered at the local watering hole to await the election's result. You could cut the tension with a knife as supporters wearing gold "Vote Yes For HMS" T-shirts nursed drinks and made small talk shortly after polls closed at 8 p.m. They didn't have to wait long: Around 9 p.m., the crowd was informed the bond had passed with roughly 65.5 percent of the vote.

It needed 60 percent to succeed.

"We were able to educate the public that this bond was the best option for our kids, for our communities and for the future of our district," Fritz said.

| H-M-S BOND TOTALS | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Hartley Precinct | |
| Yes..... | 517 |
| No..... | 276 |
| Sanborn Precinct | |
| Yes..... | 487 |
| No..... | 256 |
| Absentee Ballots | |
| Yes..... | 197 |
| No..... | 102 |
| Total | |
| Yes..... | 1,201 (65.5 percent) |
| No..... | 634 (34.5 percent) |

"To everyone that voted 'yes,' thank you for your support."

Tuesday's result will remain unofficial until canvassed and approved April 10 by the O'Brien County Board of Supervisors. Auditor Barb Rohwer said late-arriving absentee ballots wouldn't change the result even if all were "no" votes.

H-M-S Superintendent Bill Thompson said he was "ecstatic" with the result. Three previous bond measures dating back to 2014 failed, and he was thrilled to see voters "move the district forward" Tuesday.

"I'm just so happy for the school district, all four communities and the vote 'yes' campaign," he said. "This bond is what this district needs to move forward. H-M-S has always had a lot of potential, but we've been harnessed somewhat by our facilities. We have a chance to run now."

The bond issue will finance sweeping facility changes at H-M-S including construction of a new elementary wing onto the existing high school in Hartley, additions and other significant upgrades at the middle school in Sanborn, and other renovations at the current high school. The elementary building in Hartley was slated to close following the 2018-19 school year



A voter reviews her ballot at the Hartley Public Library on April 3, 2018. SENTINEL-NEWS FILE PHOTO

regardless of the bond's result.

H-M-S Board of Directors President Scott Heetland was relieved the measure passed. Had it failed, the district was planning to pack grades TK-6 into the middle school in Sanborn by fall 2019 and house grades 7-12 in the existing high school. The plan would have forced the district to spend \$5 million on the Sanborn building, which was deemed functionally obsolete by architects in 2015 along with the elementary school.

"Finally!" Heetland said Tuesday night. "I can't thank the people enough for coming to the polls and voting 'yes,' especially with the snow and

wind today. This will give us much-needed improvements for the plus side instead of wasting money on a hodgepodge plan. In the end, it's about the kids and their education."

Heetland acknowledged the bond issue created some divisions within the community. A faction of voters expressed support for one K-12 school building, but the school board has remained committed to keeping a school building in both Hartley and Sanborn.

"I just hope over time those folks understand why we went this way," Heetland said.

Planning for the upgrades will begin in earnest, Thompson said. Right now, there are no official blueprints, just a dollar figure that will give H-M-S the adequate amount of square footage to accommodate the facility changes. "It's a long process," said Thompson. "I expect we'll start putting timelines together almost immediately."

In the meantime, supporters will relish in the bond's passage. Thompson, who is retiring at the end of the school year, appreciated Citizens for HMS's effort throughout the whole process.

"This bond had a different feel," he said, crediting former Vote Yes Committee Chair April Hengeveld for building a solid foundation of community-wide support during the previous two bond proposals. "This time around we had way, way, way more people involved from all communities in the district. It needed more of that skin in the game and they really came through."

Thompson said the district's improved facilities would be an investment for future generations.

"It's all part of a thriving community," he said. "Just being competitive and getting people to move to your district, facilities do matter."

Heetland was eager to transition into the planning stages.

"I've never been on the winning side of one of these things, but we finally got it done," he said. "This is where the real planning begins."



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: A voter trudges to the ballot box during a snowy afternoon on Tuesday, April 3, 2018. This sign on a door in Hartley urged residents to "vote no." Plenty of "vote yes" signs were erected throughout Hartley in the leadup to the April 3, 2018 election. SENTINEL-NEWS FILE PHOTOS



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