

# SULLIVAN West

NEWSLETTER 2023-24



Dear Bulldogs,

It has been a great year for Sullivan West! This past summer we invited the community to help develop a Strategic Plan for the District. Through our work together we developed a new District Mission and Vision. The Strategic Plan is the foundation of our decision making when it comes to our schools' programs and services and the budget needed to support them.

We are proud to be offering increased courses at the high school. New electives will include Agribusiness and Natural Resources. We have expanded Sullivan County Community College courses to increase the number of credits a student can earn while still in high school. We will be awarding the Seal of Civic Readiness to students that have attained a high level of proficiency in terms of civic knowledge, civic skills, civic mindset, and civic experiences. Our MSHS part time art teaching position is becoming full time to support the growing number of students taking art electives. These course offerings are a strong reflection of our vision "to provide an educational experience rich with individualized opportunities."

Other focuses include meeting the needs of the unique pre-adolescent learners by aligning curriculum and programs in grades 5 through 8. Our early literacy program will continue to build on the most current research in the science of reading and data driven instruction. Finally, our PK-12 social emotional support will continue. We still have our RULER program where students are learning to identify their feelings and appropriately cope with them, and we added the new Miss Kendra program in the Elementary School. Miss Kendra was kicked off this spring. This program focuses on education that fosters a school climate where students feel safe and confident in their ability to learn. This speaks to the part of our vision to have "an inclusive and nurturing environment."

We understand the ever-rising consumer price index. The continued high cost for fuel prices along with increasing costs of services, such as health insurance, contribute to significant overarching costs. On the revenue side we continue to see only the minimum rate of foundation aid, 3%, which equates to about \$300,000.00. Even with these factors we are asking for a 2.5% levy increase, which is under the NYS allowable tax cap. We have trimmed our budget internally but maintained our student focused programs and services.

The community support of our budget has allowed for several enhancements in our school programs and facilities. This newsletter provides just a couple highlights of items made possible from your support of Sullivan West Schools. We will continue to ensure that Sullivan West provides an educational experience that our community can be proud of.

Our hope was to provide you with a more in-depth look at our budget through the various charts and tables inside this newsletter. If you still have questions please email us at [budget@swcsd.org](mailto:budget@swcsd.org).

Thank you for your support!

With Care,

*Kathleen Bressler*

Kathleen Bressler, Ed.D  
Superintendent of Schools



## MUSIC AND ARTS

The Sullivan West Music & Arts programs have enriched, immersed and transformed all grade levels and buildings over the last few years. The primary goal being to reduce barriers for participation in the arts and to ensure any student can be engaged and empowered through an excellent arts education program here at Sullivan West. As part of our district plan regarding social and emotional wellness, the arts provide programs in our schools to help support individual interests, community collaboration, and create an environment where all students are celebrated. The cornerstone of becoming a successful lifelong learner at any age comes down to the four C's: critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication in the 21st century learning. Sullivan West Arts programs provide those essential tools.



## EXCITING NEW ELECTIVES AT THE HIGH SCHOOL AND ESPORTS

As we continue to strengthen the student experience here at Sullivan West High School, we have added to both activities and academics for our students. It is through all experiences and opportunities which allow our students to create a path for their lives after they have graduated. Academically, we have added to our elective course offerings. During student meetings, recommendations for new or re-introduced courses were presented. For the 2023-24 school year students will be able to enroll in new courses such as Introduction to Athletic Training, Agribusiness and Introduction to Teaching. Students can also continue to gain college credit through Sullivan County Community College (SCCC) in re-introduced Renewable Energy or new SCCC US History, and Government and Economics. To get students connected to the school commu-

nity outside of classes, membership on our eSports team has skyrocketed. With 25 consistent players in grades 7-11, they compete twice a week against other schools throughout NYS. Students of all ability levels take part, and the excitement is high. We will continue to review our students' experiences, gaining their input on academic programming and extracurricular activities.



## SAFETY FIRST!

In light of many terrible school incidents across the nation, this past year Sullivan West took a hard look at how we keep our schools safe and secure for students, faculty and staff. We started last summer by inviting the State Police and the Sheriff's Office to discuss how we can help local law enforcement best support us in case of an emergency. We then had Homeland Security perform a free School Safety Audit in both school buildings. From that audit we took the recommendations to our school safety teams. We have partnered with local emergency responders to help us review safety recommendations and support us in drills and events that promote school safety. We are proud of the on-going work that has been done. Mr. Carbone and Mr. Haberli led our schools in an evacuation drill where students were relocated off campus for the first time in three years. We continue to implement the audit recommendations and we look forward to our Capital Project bringing secured vestibules to both school buildings. We thank our community for their continued support in helping us make Sullivan West Schools a safe place to be.





## EXPANDING LITERACY

Literacy continues to be a large focus of our Elementary School, especially for the primary grades. While in 2021-2022 we began a new literacy initiative for grades K-2, this year continued to expand down to Pre-K and up to the third grade. What is so special about our program is that it includes instruction for reading and writing. It involves bringing back a stronger phonics focus, while still promoting creativity and a love for reading. Our teachers have used common assessments in order to have the best data to make instructional decisions for their students and to help them plan as a team. Their positivity and commitment to literacy instruction is impressive. Sullivan West is looking forward to our End of the Year data that no doubt will show just how much our students are growing!



## SULLIVAN WEST STABILITY

Over the years, Sullivan West's school population has declined. This has been a concern for many of us who remember classes of over a hundred students regularly and who know that state aid is tied to these numbers. In the summer the school had a Long-Range Comprehensive Study done. This is a study on our school enrollment with predictions for the next ten years. They use data from a variety of resources such as the National Census Bureau, the National Association of Realtors, Local Town Planning Boards, and the National Center for Health Statistics. The findings were uplifting. While we are predicted to lose another 58 students over the

next ten years, this is due to our last largest classes graduating. All incoming kindergarten classes are expected to remain at a size consistently in the low 70s for the next ten years and our incoming kindergarten class will be larger than our existing 6th grade class for 8 out of the next 10 years. This data helps us plan staffing and supports us as we create our budget with the future in mind. We will have another study done in five years to keep informed of our enrollment trends. For now, we are happy to see the years of hard rapid decline are over.

## CAPITAL PROJECT

Thanks to our school community support we were able to pass our Capital Project last October. This \$25.8 million dollar project will be addressing serious infrastructure needs identified by our building condition survey such as roofs, boilers, and 1938 windows just to name a few. Our infrastructure is the main priority. Other design updates include security vestibules at both the Elementary and Middle/High School. In addition, at the Elementary school it includes an expanded health office suite and bathrooms in our two Pre-K rooms. At the High School there are cafeteria and library redesigns and more storage for our PE, sports and facility equipment. We have submitted Phase 1 plans to the state which include the security vestibules at both buildings. If Phase 1 plans are approved soon, and materials are available, we will be able to start construction this summer. If not, it will be combined with Phase 2 infrastructure and roof construction that will start the summer of 2024-2025. We are excited about moving forward with this work!





# Sullivan West Central School District

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## SULLIVAN FFA ADVENTURES

The FFA, under the leadership of Paddy McCarthy has continued to take on new experiences. Mr. McCarthy received another FFA grant of over \$5000.00 to support FFA activities. The FFA Chapter embarked on several new adventures in our 2nd full year as an FFA chapter. First, we attended the National Convention in Indianapolis in the fall and spent a winter weekend at the Oswegatchie Educational Center in the Adirondacks where we learned outdoor survival, snowshoeing, and teambuilding.

We also held our own local Leadership Development Contest in public speaking and traveled to both the District and Substates Competitions. We are also heading to the State FFA Convention in Buffalo this May. We look forward to seeing the success of our students as they continue with all these FFA events and opportunities.