

Dialogue

Neenah Joint School District Community Newsletter

Spring 2020



YES TO THE FUTURE *Community Supports Spring Referendum*

Project Timeline

Safety and Security Upgrades

Summer 2020 - Clayton, Horace Mann, Lakeview, Spring Road, Taft and Wilson
Summer 2021 - Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, Tullar and Washington

New Neenah High School

May 2020-Oct. 2021 - Design phase
June 2021-July 2023 - Construction
August 2023 - Move-in

Middle/Intermediate Schools

Summers 2021-22 - Remodeling
August 2023 - Move-in
September 2023 - Schools open

* - plans regarding the future of Horace Mann Middle School and elementary schools have yet to be determined by the Board of Education.

Students in the Neenah Joint School District will attend a new high school and have expanded space and facilities for all students in the fall of 2023 after voters supported the District's first successful facilities referendum in over 25 years.

With the \$114.9 million amount as well as \$47 million of borrowing from the District budget, the District will build a new high school on a 225-acre parcel currently located in the Town of Neenah. The existing high school will be converted into a middle school for grades 7-8 and an intermediate school for grades 5-6. The plan will close 92-year-old Shattuck Middle School in the fall of 2023 and move fifth graders out of elementary schools. Safety and security upgrades that are part of the plan will begin already this summer.

"This is an historic time for the children of the Neenah Joint School District and our entire community," said Superintendent Dr.

Mary Pfeiffer. "This was a plan that was driven through community input and we are so thankful to be in such a forward-thinking community."

The passed referendum comes one year following a failed \$129.58 million referendum that would have built a new middle school to replace Shattuck. The passed referendum comes at a significantly lower tax impact than the previous year. Residents will see an impact of \$99 per \$100,000 of property value over 20 years, compared to \$167 per \$100,000 of property value.

"Last year's defeat was difficult, but our community helped us shape an even better plan," Pfeiffer said. "This is a plan that addresses a great majority of our needs in less than four years. We still have work to do at our elementary level, but this plan gives us the flexibility to potentially address those needs without another referendum."

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Life has changed for everyone in recent months, particularly in education. Teachers, children and parents have participated in "digital learning" since school closed on March 18. Neenah has been a frontrunner in technology, having engaged in virtual learning during several days schools were closed due to cold weather in 2018-19. Every K-12 student in the District has his or her own iPad or Chromebook.

NHS Will Hold Online Graduation

The Class of 2020 at Neenah High School will be celebrated like no other in the school's 144-year history of graduation ceremonies.

For the first time, Neenah seniors will be honored in a "virtual" graduation ceremony that will consist of most of the same aspects of previous graduations and at the same date and time as originally scheduled on Wednesday, May 27 at 7 p.m. through a link on YouTube.

The 480 seniors scheduled times to pick up caps and gowns on May 6 and 7 in the school parking lot. Each senior put on his or her cap and gown and had a photo taken. The photos will be incorporated into the ceremony as each senior's name is called. The ceremony will include the usual commencement addresses from two members of the senior class and musical performances. A representative from the Board of Education will also address the class, along with Principal Brian Wunderlich and Superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer.

"Graduation is the culmination of at least 13 years of education in our School District for most of our seniors," Wunderlich said. "We recognize its importance and will do everything possible to make this a special and dignified ceremony for our seniors and their families."

From the Superintendent



In January, the words “Forward Together” splashed across the front page of our Dialogue newsletter.

Of course, at the time the words referred to our then-upcoming referendum question, but they seem even more relevant now given our current situation. Whether you’re feeling tested with your child’s digital learning, missing contact with a friend or family member, finding new approaches to personal wellness or any number of challenges, one thing is for sure: We’re all in this together.

I believe the opening of a new high school in the fall of 2023 will be the culmination of a rallying point to bring everyone in Neenah and our surrounding communities together. The fact that voters supported the referendum amid uncertain times and a chaotic election process was an extraordinary endorsement for the schools and children of our community. The high voter turnout and significant engagement in our informational sessions and social media posts illustrated the passion for education in our District. This community-wide decision will not only support our children within three years, but for generations to come.

We are incredibly grateful to all of those who voted in support and especially grateful to those individuals and business owners who contributed substantial time and investment to inform others of the merits of our proposal. Our safety and security upgrades have already begun at five elementary schools and planning for the new high school and the transition of fifth through eighth grade students to the existing high school is underway. Shovels will hit the dirt in the summer of 2021 and the high school will be open two years later.

Even though it’s an unpredictable time in our world, it’s truly an inspiring time to be in Neenah. We’ve been one of the state’s leaders in technology and digital learning, so our children have still been learning despite missing so many days of school. In three years, our teenagers will be in the most state-of-the-art, hands-on, college-and-career-ready high school in the state.

There’s so much to be encouraged about and we will do it as we do best: Forward Together.

Neenah With Pride!

Dr. Mary Pfeiffer
Superintendent of Schools

Digital Learning

...from a Teacher’s Perspective

Many of us have experienced the challenges of digital learning for students and families, but how are teachers handling it? Here’s the perspective from teachers at three different grade levels of their experiences this spring.

Alisia Myers, 4th Grade, Lakeview

When digital learning began in mid-March, we had no idea what we were getting into. Since then, teachers and staff have needed to learn new ways to teach, communicate, adapt and change their practices. The planning and prep that goes into digital learning has been unexpected. Teachers have spent countless hours researching and learning about various strategies,



trying new technology resources, reading teacher blogs, learning about ways to make digital learning work at this level, and collaborating with colleagues about lessons and students to better ourselves and our teaching.

Digital learning and teaching is HARD. However, in NJSD, we are lucky to have the best families, resources, support and staff any of us could ask for, but there was no way to prepare for this. It is a world of unknown that none of us signed up for, but we are all doing our best each and every day to ensure that our students can continue their learning, and more importantly, know that their teachers are still here, worrying about them, loving them and missing them like crazy.

Amy Leach, Math, Shattuck

When our digital learning days began back in March, it was a pretty smooth transition because Neenah had done a lot with digital learning lessons last year during our many weather-related school cancellations. However, it soon became apparent that we were facing a completely different challenge with new concerns. Do I still try to cover the same amount of material each day? How do I gauge if I am giving too much/little work? How do I keep the students engaged? How will the kids still be able to see my amazing dance moves they enjoy



so much? I have learned there is no longer a “typical” teaching day.

My lessons typically consist of a tutorial video I have made along with some type of practice. The practices come in many forms, usually a task online that I either create or find. I am able to see which students have logged in and completed the work. The goal is to try to make the material meaningful but not too intense/complicated/lengthy for the student.

Jennifer Hager, English, Neenah H.S.

Kids miss school. Many are shocked when they verbalize this statement. The words flow past their lips with awe and a little bit of repulsion. Many preface the words with the phrase, “I never thought I would say this, but...” I teach English to seniors and juniors every day during the school year. I love my job. I work with wonderful colleagues who are creative and kind, compassionate and funny. And I see them care about and work for what is best for kids every day. I miss school. They miss school.

This digital learning has been a challenge for me. I think I am pretty decent with technology and I use various platforms in my daily classes; however, what was comfortable for a snow day takes on a whole new level for weeks on end. The technology issues are solved through the support of the amazing tech team and by the ingenuity and generosity of colleagues; however, I miss students every day. I miss their questions. I miss their laughter. I miss their shenanigans and their greetings in the hallway. I miss their triumphs. I miss hearing about all of the amazing things they do outside of the classroom.

But we are also learning other things...We are learning that “together” looks different sometimes. We are learning hope. We are learning resilience. We are learning that we value school; we are learning that we miss school.



Ten Neenah Schools Earn Project Lead The Way Distinction

Neenah High School has been honored as one of eight Wisconsin high schools as a Project Lead The Way Distinguished High School award winner and nine of the District's elementary schools were also honored for launching their Project Lead The Way programs.

Neenah High School was one of 143 high schools nationwide honored with the award and the only Wisconsin high school with more than 1,100 students in grades 9-12. The award honors schools committed to increasing student access, engagement and achievement in their programs.



Nine elementary schools in Neenah launched Project Lead The Way in 2016-17 with the program fully implemented in the curriculum for the 2018-19 school year. Clayton, Coolidge, Hoover, Lakeview, Roosevelt, Spring Road, Taft, Tullar and Wilson Elementary

Schools were among 404 elementary schools honored nationwide and 23 across Wisconsin.

The Distinguished School award recognizes schools committed to increasing student access, engagement, and achievement in their Project Lead The Way programs.

Project Lead The Way empowers students to develop in-demand, transportable knowledge and skills through pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science. The program's teacher training and resources support teachers as they engage their students in real-world learning. Approximately 12,200 elementary, middle, and high schools in all 50 states offer Project Lead the Way programs.

Borchardt and Fridley Recipients of First Fox Cities Education Awards

Two Neenah Joint School District educators are among the recipients of the inaugural Fox Cities Excellence in Education Shining Star Awards from the Fox Cities Chamber. The awards acknowledge and celebrate the unparalleled contributions of educators working and shining in Fox Cities schools, colleges, universities and other educational settings.

Neenah High School teacher Brian Borchardt (*pictured, left*) received the Excellence in Student Services Award. The award honors a Fox Cities educator who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to supporting students in and outside the classroom.

Horace Mann Middle School teacher Jason Fridley (*pictured, right*) received the Inclusive Excellence in Education Award. The award honors a Fox Cities educator who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to a comprehensive practice of valuing, engaging, advocating for and celebrating the rich diversity of students.



Lunch on Wheels

Neenah Brings Lunches to Students Throughout School Closure

It's been said there's no such thing as a free lunch. But for students in the Neenah Joint School District over the past several weeks, it's not only been a free lunch, but a free breakfast during every weekday.

A federally-funded summer lunch program has extended into the school year and delivered over 100,000 lunches as of early May. Since the COVID-19 outbreak closed schools on March 17, every child age 18 and under has been able to get a free lunch and breakfast. The meals have been brought directly to the children through a partnership with Kobussen buses.



Ten buses make a total of 97 different stops at locations throughout the District boundaries. It's made a huge impact for families who are struggling during this time of uncertainty and helped parents who are still working to get a healthy and nutritious lunch on the table for their children. It has also provided work for food service employees and bus drivers during the school closure.

Over 30 percent of Neenah Joint School District students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The current program is open to everyone and nearly 2,000 lunches have been distributed daily. The lunch deliveries will continue as long as schools remain closed and possibly into the summer.

Kools Caps Undefeated Wrestling Season With State Championship

Neenah High School senior Marshall Kools became the school's ninth WIAA state wrestling individual champion with a pin over Zach Wallace of Burlington at 195 pounds on Feb. 29 in Madison.

Kools finished the tournament with three straight pins after his opening round victory. He added a pin the following weekend at the WIAA state team tournament to finish the season with a perfect 45-0 record. As a junior, Kools placed third at state and went 43-2 overall. He has signed a letter of intent to wrestle at Stanford University next season.

Neenah's sectional championship and participation in the WIAA state team tournament marked its second appearance in the event and first since 2004. The Rockets lost to eventual state champion Stoughton 45-24 in the quarterfinals.

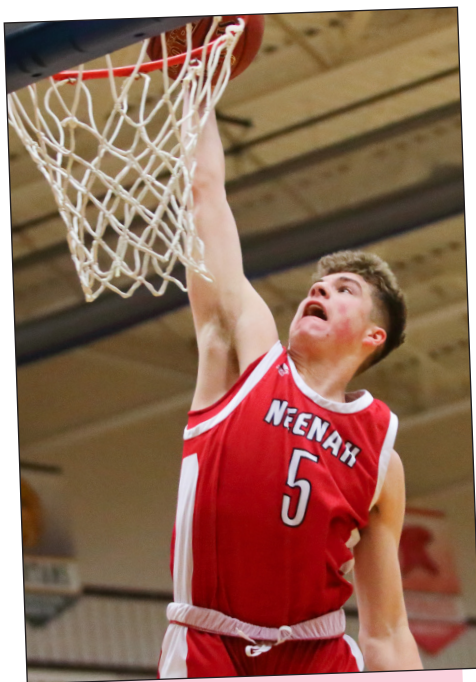


Shattuck Robotics Team Participates in "Virtual" World Competition

A team of three Shattuck Middle School students qualified for the VEX Robotics IQ Challenge World Championships after a fourth place finish at the state competition. Myah Wenzel, Lexi Dorner, and Julia Rangel (pictured, left to right) earned a spot in the event, which was done in a virtual format.

It marks the second straight year that Shattuck has had a team qualify for the World Championships. The group is under the guidance of teacher Brian Schalliol. The team won awards at four different meets. Along with state, they won the Excellence Award at two different tournaments and the Judges Award at another.

Robotic skills is a combination of points earned by a student driver and an autonomous driver on the competition field.



Max Klesmit finished with 1,636 career points to become the all-time leading scorer in the illustrious history of Neenah boys basketball. Klesmit, a second-team all-state selection, led the Rockets to a 23-2 record and 14 straight wins to end the season. He will attend Division I Wofford College (S.C.).

Spring Road Receives Healthy Schools Grant

Spring Road Elementary School is one of 25 Wisconsin schools to receive a \$2,000 Healthy Schools Grant by the Mission: Healthy Kids program, a partnership of Children's Wisconsin and Kohl's Cares.

The grants are designated to help support work surrounding each school's identified improvement area. Spring Road will use the grant money to provide mindfulness programs for its families and also purchase chimes, apps and other equipment to promote mental health in its classrooms.

Wellness awards are common at Spring Road. The school has been a recipient of the Department of Public Instruction Wisconsin School Health Award every year in the award's six-year history. Spring Road also won the Fox Cities Marathon School Challenge for having the most participants in the weekend events.

Mission: Healthy Kids promotes policy, systems and environmental changes in schools that improve school community health specifically in the areas of nutrition, physical activity and healthy minds.



About 175 vehicles looped around Neenah High School on April 21 to support the Class of 2020 seniors who had their sports and activities end early. The vehicles circled the school and athletic fields with the lights turned on at Rocket Stadium, Harry Kelderman Field and the Tom Berven tennis courts.

Five Individuals to be Inducted to NJSD Hall of Fame on September 19

Five prominent alumni comprise the Neenah Joint School District's sixth annual Hall of Fame class in 2020. Those inducted will be Dr. Gary Losse, Todd Patterson, Vern Wollerman, Marti (Schreier) Wronski and Robert Yablon.

Join Us

Celebrate the 2020 Hall of Fame class at a luncheon on **Sat., Sept. 19 at 11:30 a.m.** at Bridgewood. Tickets go on sale August 1.



Losse, a 1967 graduate, was an accomplished three-sport athlete and went on to a prestigious medical career as an orthopedic surgeon. Losse was an all-state quarterback on Neenah's undefeated team in 1966 and an all-state guard in basketball. He played two seasons of football at UW-Madison. Losse spent 17 years as the team doctor for the San Diego Chargers. He died in 2018.



Patterson, a 1974 graduate, has a unique combination of success in athletics and fine arts. He captained the football and wrestling teams and was also active in choir and swing choir. Patterson taught science at Wooster (Ohio) High School from 1978-2013 and coached football, wrestling, soccer and softball, while directing theater productions. He resides in Wooster, Ohio.



Wollerman, a 1942 graduate, was a World War II veteran and joined the Neenah police force in 1946, serving as chief from 1973-86. He also started the city's little league baseball program. Wollerman helped Neenah to the semifinals of the 1942 state basketball tournament. He died in 1992.



Wronski, a 1990 graduate, serves as General Counsel and Senior Vice President-Administration for the Milwaukee Brewers. She graduated from St. Norbert College in 1994 and from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School in 1997. In high school, she participated in cheerleading, French Club and yearbook. Wronski resides in Bayside, Wis.



Yablon, a 1995 graduate, was a champion debate student and Rhodes Scholar. He graduated with high honors in 1999 from UW-Madison in political science and economics. Yablon graduated from Yale Law School and served as a clerk for U.S. Supreme Court justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor. He is a law professor at

UW-Madison and resides in Madison.

Nominations for future Hall of Fame classes are accepted through the Neenah Joint School District website. Forms are also available at the District Office. Individuals need to be nominated by November 30 to be considered for the upcoming year.

Safety and Security Projects Already Underway at Five Elementary Schools

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Pfeiffer added that the tax impact will not be felt until the District begins borrowing money for the project and that it will likely be even less than the projected \$99 due to historically-low interest rates.

"We are sensitive that the timing of this referendum is challenging for some in our community," she said. "We hope to take advantage of extremely low interest rates to minimize the impact on our residents. This will hopefully bring our community together as we overcome these difficult times."

Neenah's last successful facilities referendum was Feb. 21, 1995 with a \$15 million referendum to build the link at the high school and make upgrades at other schools.



A group of 13 Neenah High School students captured first place in a regional competition to qualify for the Wisconsin Art Education Association State Visual Arts Classic. Students have two hours to create an on-site art project and also participate as a team in an art history quiz bowl and a critical thinking problem solving activity.



Washington Early Learning Center now has a sensory path for four-year-old kindergarten and early learning students. Sensory paths provide a simple way for students to learn and move during the day. Students can move through the letters of the alphabet, a Rocket blastoff countdown from 10-1 and the planets in order.



Neenah High School Police Liaison Officer Vicki Strelbe was recently chosen as Woman Officer of the Year by the Wisconsin Association of Women Police. The Neenah Police Department cited her courage, leadership, positive attitude and willingness to help in her award nomination. Strelbe was presented the award by Chief Aaron Olson.

Shattuck Teacher Muraski Selected as Wisconsin Educator of Promise

Shattuck Middle School teacher Sarah Muraski is one of 60 Educators of Promise selected by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Muraski will have the opportunity to collaborate with all of the winners during a three-day leadership retreat in July at Fort McCoy. The group was selected for having a strong potential for educational and community leadership.



The award recognizes teachers, pupil services directors and administrators from all grade levels for their focus on readiness in learning and

leadership.

Muraski is in her third year as a social studies teacher in Neenah.



Sunset Hill Stoneware in Neenah donated over 500 hockey-puck-sized pieces of clay for a hands-on art activity for students at Hoover, Taft and Wilson during May. The clay was distributed by the lunch buses for an elective assignment. Students can create their favorite animal and then post it online with the hashtag #myclaycreation.

Hintz Replaces Holt as Director of Human Resources After 31 Years

With nearly 20 years of experience in the field of human resources, Jami Hintz has been hired as the Neenah Joint School District Director of Human Resources.



Hintz (pictured, top) spent nearly six years as the Director of Human Resources for the Green Bay Area Catholic Education (GRACE) school system. She replaces Vicky Holt (pictured, bottom), who is retiring after 31 years in the District and 21 in the human resources position.



In Green Bay, Hintz supported 350-400 employees early in the formation of the system that combined nine different Catholic schools. Prior to her stint with GRACE, she worked 12 years as the Manager of Human Resources for the non-profit Family Service, Inc. in Madison. A Pulaski native, Hintz is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and earned a Master's of Business Administration (MBA) from Lakeland College.

She is a certified Professional in Human Resources (PHR).

Holt is retiring from her career in the District that began as a special education teacher at Shattuck Middle School. She also served as principal at Horace Mann Middle School before her current role.

Roosevelt and Wilson Named Wisconsin Schools of Recognition

Roosevelt and Wilson Elementary Schools have been honored as 2019-20 Wisconsin Title I School of Recognition Award recipients by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Roosevelt was chosen in the "High-Progress School" category and Wilson was selected as a "Beating-the-Odds School." It is the third time in four years Roosevelt has earned an award, collecting the High-Progress honor in 2017 and 2018. Wilson was selected for an award for the first time in the program's 18-year history.

Roosevelt was one of 23 schools statewide in the High-Progress category. The award honors schools that fall within the top 10 percent of schools experiencing student growth in reading and mathematics and have achievement gaps that are less than three percentage points between student groups.

Wilson's award as a "Beating-the-Odds School" honors schools that are in the top 25 percent of high-poverty schools in the state and have above-average student achievement in reading and mathematics when compared to schools from similarly-sized districts, schools, grade configurations and poverty levels. Wilson was one of 77 schools statewide in the Beating-the-Odds category.

Both schools achieved "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" ratings on the Wisconsin School Report Cards for 2018-19. All Wisconsin Title I Schools of Recognition receive federal Title I aid to provide services to high numbers or high percentages of economically disadvantaged children. All Schools of Recognition also meet the state's test participation, attendance and dropout goals.



The Neenah High School powerlifting team won five team trophies and had two individual champions at the Wisconsin High School Powerlifting Association state championships at the Fox Cities Exhibition Center. Brayden Londerville became a four-time state champion 148-pound boys equipped division and Bella Mullally won her first state title in the 165-pound girls raw division. The girls raw team placed second overall.



Motivational speaker, author and poet Kwabena Nixon spoke to African-American male students on two occasions in February at Shattuck and Neenah High School. Nixon shared his personal stories of growing up in West Chicago and coached Neenah students about their dreams and futures through discussion, poems and writing exercises.



Horace Mann student council members traveled to six different Neenah elementary schools as well as American Grand Assisted Living to share their love of reading with our community. Students read books to small groups of students at the schools and residents at the assisted living facility. The events were part of Read Across America Week in early March.



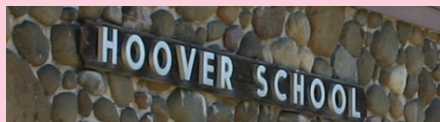
Alliance Elementary School is showing its support for its Theda Care neighbors across the street with an outdoor sign that reads, "Thank You to Our Heroes." Thanks to everyone working in healthcare and thanks to the Zickler family for making this recognition happen.



Clayton students had the opportunity to see and touch a variety of different animals with a visit from the NEW Zoo "Zoomobile." The event was a reward for students who earned at least 70 Cougar Paws for achieving behavior expectations at school.



Coolidge students were visited by Wisconsin author Marla McKenna on March 8. Her books support finding homes for animals in need and promoting literacy to children through the game of baseball. She shared her experiences as an author and the importance of her causes.



Hoover students participated in a mystery tunes event during the week of March 9-13 for Music in Our Schools Month. A short piece of a popular song was played for the students each day and a winner was chosen among those with the correct answer the following day.



Lakeview families have been participating in a virtual reading activity and trivia contest to bring all families together during digital learning. Each day, a different staff member reads a chapter from the book, "Bat and the Waiting Game." The following day a trivia question is asked from each chapter.



Roosevelt student fifth grader Mae Lauer received a \$1,000 scholarship from the Ben Carson Scholarship Foundation that can be used for college upon high school graduation. This is the fifth year of the award that is annually given to a Roosevelt student by a generous donor.



Spring Road staff members received 20 boxes of food donated by Festival Foods in Neenah to support the school's families in need during the pandemic. Some families picked up their boxes at the school, while others were delivered by Spring Road staff members.



Taft kindergarten and first grade students celebrated 100 days of learning by spreading gifts of kindness to the community. The students aimed to collect 100 items for Neenah's Animal Shelter and surpassed their goal by collecting over 200 items to donate.



Tullar staff members all recorded a video on April 3 that was shared with every Tullar family showing how much the staff members miss seeing the students every day. Staff members recorded the videos at home and compiled them for all of the families.



Washington offered Love and Logic parenting tools and techniques to help parents achieve respectful, healthy relationships with their children. Parents could view information and videos while attending Parent-Teacher Conferences.



Wilson students participated in a "virtual spirit week" from April 20-24. Students and staff members dressed up each day and then shared pictures of themselves with each other to share a sense of community during the digital learning environment.

A Passion for Excellence
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POSTAL PATRON

Past Presidents Thompson and Swardenski Depart Board of Education

Two individuals who have combined to serve as president of the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education for the past 14 years both participated in their final meeting on April 21.

Scott Thompson, a 15-year veteran of the Board, and Michelle Swardenski, a seven-year Board member, chose not to seek re-election following the completion of their most recent term. Swardenski was president for the past four years after succeeding Thompson, who presided over the Board for 10 years.

“The contributions Scott and Michelle made to our District are monumental,” said Superintendent Dr. Mary Pfeiffer. “Their



dedication to our community and our children has been immense. Both were great leaders and brought our District to a new level. They will be greatly missed on our Board”

Thompson served five three-year terms and took over as president in his second year in 2006. He guided the Board through challenging times early in his tenure with significant budget cuts at the end of the decade and Wisconsin Act 10 that withdrew employees’ union rights under Governor Scott Walker in 2011. He was instrumental in developing a financial plan to fund a pre-existing \$100

million liability for post-retirement benefits that will be completed in July 2020.

Swardenski, a 1997 Neenah graduate, brought an attorney background to the position and began with a one-year appointment in 2013. She won her first of two three-year terms the following year and was elected Board president in 2016. She was a driving force behind the District’s emphasis on mental health and improved graduation rate. Swardenski led the Board through a facilities study that began in December 2016 and culminated with a successful \$114.9 million referendum in April 2020.



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Board Meetings Move Online

All Neenah Joint School District Board of Education meetings will be held online via Google Meet until further notice. The public is welcome to join the meetings through a link on the District website (www.neenah.k12.wi.us). Meetings are typically held the first and third Tuesday of each month. There will be one meeting during both June and July, held on June 2 and July 21.