



Tornado Times

Website: www.southernlocalmeigs.org

Volume 9 Issue 1 Summer, 2010



District Mission: Southern Local Schools with community involvement, will prepare our students to meet the challenges of tomorrow by modeling excellence and teaching fundamental skills today.

The Past, Present, and Future of Southern Local

It has been a very busy summer for all of us at Southern Local. The buildings are undergoing their final preparations for the August 23rd start date for the teachers. We have been busy interviewing new teachers and trying to get the staff set for the 2010- 2011 school year.

I have noticed that the band members are out in full force this past week working on their final preparations for the fall football season. Mr. Dodson and his gang did one heck of a great job at the 4th of July parade. Keep up the tremendous work! Coach Wickline and the football staff have been working hard also. I noticed around 43 young men at camp this week.

I would like to take some time and talk about the upcoming bond issue. Tricia McNickle and her troops have been out in full force answering questions and trying to make sure that accurate information is being put out to the public. There is a complete slide show on the school's website explaining the issue and what it will cost the taxpayers. The website address is: www.southernlocalmeigs.org. The many signs across the district speak volumes for the support for the children of Southern Local School District. If you still have questions concerning the bond issue, you can contact the school at 949-2611 and ask to talk to me or Roy Johnson. I will briefly recap the issues that have been mentioned before;

1. The issue is to raise 3.9 million dollars to build a new high school
2. The millage will be about 2.7 mills
3. The average home value in Meigs County is \$60,000 and this would cost around \$49.00 per year at that value if you are under 65, and about \$28.00 per year if you are over 65.
4. There are some low interest rate bonds out there and some 0% bonds available.
5. The state will kick in around 7.5 million dollars if we pass the issue.
6. The construction manager assigned to the project is DCK Worldwide.
7. The architectural firm chosen for the project is SHP Leading Design.
8. There will be around a one year planning period for the project in order to get public input.
9. Construction would take around two years.
10. We still have around \$1,000,000.00 to address the issues with the elementary.

At this point in time the design is only in the conceptual stage. Some of the things that we know the building will consist of are; New Competition Gym, Computer Lab, Science Labs and Classrooms, Life Skills Lab, Vocational Agricultural Lab and Classroom, Special Needs Classrooms, Media Resource Room, and Regular Classrooms.

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Superintendent Article Continued:

Southern Local has progressed a lot over the past three years and we hope to continue to move in that direction by giving the students every advantage that we can. I would like to mention some of the accomplishments;

1. We were able to overcome the financial commission that was with Southern Local for about ten years.
2. We have gone from Continuous Improvement to Effective and last year was rated as an Excellent School District.
3. We received the School of Promise designation from the State Superintendent.
4. We have been successful at landing two federal grants for over \$1,000,000.00.
5. We have landed two state grants to provide after school programming for the students of Southern Local School District.
6. We continue to improve upon our State ratings this year by meeting 24 of 26 indicators on the State Report Card.

These accomplishments are only because of the dedication of the staff and families of Southern Local School District and the leadership in the District. Southern Local is truly a great place to raise children. It is a blessing that we receive so much support from the local businesses in the District. I would also like to acknowledge the dedication of the students and their parents.

As a student of Southern Local, I have always felt that I was given the greatest chance to succeed and that I learned from the best. Again, I think that this is true of the District from a Superintendent's perspective. I hope that we can continue to keep providing a top notch education to our students in a safe, conducive, state of the art environment.

I invite you to visit our school and become part of this successful environment that is our future. Please remember to vote on August 3rd, and to thank a veteran for giving us the freedoms that we have today.

Sincerely,
Tony Deem

**Southern Local Campaign Committee Treasurer
Tricia McNickle
Southern Elementary Math**

All the positives have been accomplished with what little additional state money and limited resources we have locally. Our students deserve state-of-the-art technology and science labs that a new high school would bring. We are one of just five schools regionally that does not have a new high school or a remodeled high school.

The Southern Local Campaign Committee is made up of parents, grandparents, Southern Elementary and High School staff, and community members. We participated in the Racine 4th of July Parade trying to gain support for the August 3rd special election. Over 250 signs have been placed in yards and intersections as a reminder to Keep Southern Tornado Pride Alive. Committee members have been very busy going door to door for the past five weeks to answer any questions and explain details about property taxes and the new building. Most people were delighted to hear that property taxes for the new Southern High School would not reflect the increase until 2013. Also, Southern Elementary taxes will be paid in full in 2021.

We have received overwhelming support from the community. If you are still undecided, please give me a call @949-2443. I'd love to answer any questions you may have. As a parent of a 3rd and 9th grader at Southern, I am very excited for the future. Please vote YES August 3rd! Thank you ahead of time for your vote.

Financial Thoughts Roy Johnson, Treasurer

Southern Local is preparing for a bond issue. Is this a good time to finance the construction of new schools from a financial perspective? The answer is “yes”. There are several significant reasons that make today an excellent time to finance and construct school facilities.

The first reason is interest cost. Today’s interest rates are the lowest they’ve been in decades. What many don’t know is that governments like Southern Local are allowed to borrow money at interest rates lower than individuals like you and me. We refer to those rates as “tax-exempt” interest rates. Normal tax-exempt interest rates for school bonds are in the 4.50% range. For non governments, the same type of interest rate would be around 6.50%. So, Southern Local receives about 2% lower borrowing cost simply because they are a government.

The second reason is timing. In early 2009, the Federal Government created the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The Act is designed to encourage economic growth and expansion to combat the effects of the global recession in the United States. Two particular programs created by the Act, the Build America Bonds program, and the Qualified School Construction Bonds program offer specific incentives that can directly lower a school district’s financing cost. In general, the two programs are designed to lower interest rates to as low as 0% for qualifying projects. While there are a number of qualifiers, the most significant is that the **financing has to occur before December 31, 2010.**

Recognizing that 4.50% is very attractive on its own, being able to lower that rate even by as little as 1.00% because of ARRA, lowers the total interest rate (total property tax bill) by several million dollars over the life of a bond issue.

The significant decline in non-residential building construction is the third reason to act now. According to a major global construction consulting and management firm, construction costs declined 13.22% domestically in 2009. Double digit discounts in construction cost are a significant incentive to undertake a large project. When you consider Southern Local’s construction cost of a new high school facility is \$11,360,108.00, a 13% discount saves nearly \$1,476,814.00 in total project cost.

The last reason is the ability to maintain current tax levels. The school board has the ability to allow the community to lock the value of low interest rates and lower construction cost without increasing property taxes for the bonds until 2013. While this is a taxing option used regularly by many governments, school districts rarely use the option of financing bonds for up to three years without collecting taxes. That option is available to our community as well. This option is not without cost since interest accumulates during the period of time taxes are deferred; however, many people appreciate the ability to support schools without increasing taxes during a period of economic uncertainty.

Taken all together, the points described above are sound reasons as to why proceeding with a project now, makes good financial sense.

Southern High School

Daniel Otto, Principal

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer and is looking forward to the start of another great school year. I recommend all the parents and students look at the school website at the beginning of August to see the updated handbook, policies, and general information. The website is www.southernlocalmeigs.org.

Now to the important issue at hand. We are asking all our community members that are registered voters to come out and show their support for Southern High School and Southern Local School District by voting YES on August 3 for the funding of a new high school. I can't begin to tell you how beneficial it will be to our students and our community to be educated in an up-to-date facility. The school report card will be released from the state shortly. When it is released you will be proud to be associated with Southern Local. The elementary built on its excellent performance from last year and the high school may have performed the best it ever has on the state tests. I know I am proud of all the hard work put in by the students, staff, and community members, groups, and companies (Gatling Ohio, LLC) that helped or partnered with us. I look forward to our improvements in the 2010-11 school year. I know in my heart that we do a great job with our current technology and facilities. However, I also know that we can do better and provide more opportunities for our students if we get new facilities.

In closing, I would like to thank all those that have put in the time and effort to help get the correct information about what voting "YES" would mean to the school, community, and tax payer. Thank you in advance for all of you that vote YES.

"Intelligence plus character that is the goal of true education." **Martin Luther King**

Southern Elementary: Plotting a Trail to Academic Excellence **By Kent Wolfe, Principal**

It is that time of year again as the sight of flashing school bus lights on your way to work is right around the corner. The faculty and staff of Southern Elementary School have been working diligently to get our building ready for the first pitter patter of student footsteps to start the 2010-11 school year. A few changes in staff, procedures, the handbook, and facilities have been made to accommodate the high expectations of a quality education for all of our children.

The building itself is looking as if tradition and pride have made a long-awaited comeback to the Southern Local School District. Fresh coats of paint and wax are being laid on the walls and floors respectively to improve the appearance of the building. The gymnasium floor is also being refinished to hopefully instill a sense of pride and respect in our school not only for our students, but also from those in other communities as well.

Changes in the handbook as well as procedures in the areas of arrival/dismissal and lunch times are occurring for the safety and overall benefit of our students. We are anxiously awaiting the final results of the state report card to determine whether we have become an excellent rated school for the second consecutive year. Letters have been sent to students who passed a certain amount of achievement tests thus getting a pass to the Meigs County Fair. I am also setting up class field trips to Camden Park and to the Cincinnati Reds baseball game for those classes who met their class incentive for the achievement tests. Additional changes in the handbook revolve around the hard work and dedication of the teachers involved with the "Tornado Pride Academic Program", which will hopefully lead to effective adjustments in the student code of conduct. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to call. I will begin my school year on Monday, August 2nd. I look forward to meeting you and working with you and the staff to provide your children with the high quality of education to which they deserve.

**Scott Wolfe, Principal
Southern Elementary K-3**

SOUTHERN OFFERS STRONG FOUNDATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

The key to any strong structure is its foundation. The foundation for the students at Southern Local Schools has been solid; in fact, last year (2008-09 school year) Southern was an “Ohio School District of Excellence.” By the same token Southern Elementary was an “Ohio School of Excellence”.

As a result of the state testing, Southern was rated as the best elementary in Meigs County and the Special Education results revealed that Southern had shown more student growth than any other district in the state. How’s that for being number one?

Many great, positive things are happening in the Southern Local School District.

This last school year of 2009-2010 Southern exceeded performance from the previous year. Overall, the High School hit eleven of twelve (11 of 12) standards/indicators and the elementary hit fourteen of fifteen (14-15) . Two more indicators and Southern would have been perfect! In early August the State Report Card will officially be released to the public. All indications are that Southern will again be a “School of Excellence” and a “District of Excellence”; maybe even a higher rating.

Many times only the negatives are heard in public. But truthfully, the negatives were few these past couple years. The positives far outweigh any negatives.

One of the strongest indicators that Southern has passed with flying colors is a category called “Value Added Data”. After a baseline score is set with initial testing students are measured on how much progress they have made in one year’s time. It is hoped all students make “one year’s growth”. At Southern nearly all students made “one year’s growth” and a high percentage made much more than one year’s growth.

This measure is a result of great teaching, parental support at home, and hard work from the students. Everyone has done a great job!

Here are some other positives at Southern

- Discipline referrals have dropped
- Scores have gone up *Summer Enrichment Program Initiated
- Special Education has met all State Indicators
- Federal Programs have passed all state audits
- Parental Support and Volunteer programs have seen an increase
- Southern “Tornado Pride” Reward program and student recognition
- Drug and Alcohol use has decreased
- TAG (Talented and Gifted) has won numerous awards
- Southern teachers have worked extensively on a Co-Teaching program
- Special Education has implemented Inclusion
- Southern students have shown they are prepared for college
- Southern has sent the highest number of students to college in the region

Also, Southern has many positive things that cannot be measured-student safety, hometown atmosphere, no major violent incidents, high goal setting, personal caring staff, and positive reinforcement. There are many other immeasurable positives too numerous to list.

Summer, 2010

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