

The Saydel Communicator

Big City Opportunities, Small Town Commitment For Students



Fall Issue, August 2025

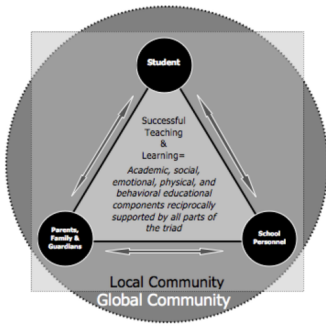
Message From The Superintendent

Greetings Saydel Families and Community Members!

As we prepare to dive back into the business of education, we have great hopes and expectations for the upcoming 2025-26 school year. Our mantra for the year is centered around the collective power we hold in working together, the trust we have in each other, and the faith in our people and organization to make the difference we all seek with our learners; hence we "BELIEVE!" With this mindset, Saydel Staff has a renewed sense of purpose as we plan and prepare to build strong relational capacity, dive into rigorous academics and the well-being of our students, and work to move our district from "good to great." It has been an especially exciting time as we have new staff members across the district, which provides excellent opportunities for fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and increased growth potential for our organization. If you happen to see new staff members in our buildings, please welcome them to our Saydel Family.



As teaching and learning commences, please work collectively to get to know your child's teacher(s) in an effort to fortify this important triad partnership (see graphic). In this essential partnership between school, parents/guardians/family, and students, we work in unity to ensure we get the most out of our collective time and efforts; hence one plus a year's growth for all learners.



At the foundation of this partnership lies trusting and respectful relationships, effective and productive communication, and high expectations for all. With these attributes guiding us, we will, undoubtedly, make a significant difference in the lives of our youth. Please help us in continuing to build, fortify, and sustain strong, healthy partnerships here at Saydel CSD.

In continuing this great business of educating our youth, please help us in recognizing our Saydel Board Members: Gary Christensen II, Mike Mortensen, Julie Jennings, Jennifer Van Houten, Jimmy Van Der Kamp, Samantha McNeeley, and Tricia Zeis. Their dedication and commitments to the Saydel Community are very much appreciated and are great examples of giving back; hence their civic duties. Far too often, we overlook these important roles that school board members play in establishing direction, preparing our district for future challenges, and ultimately successes for our youth. Our school board has been instrumental in the progress our district has made, directly benefiting our students and community over the years. For that, we are extremely thankful!

In closing, we have so much to be thankful for here at Saydel CSD, and we are all working hard to continue to improve our organization as we move into our bright future. Our motto **"BELIEVE"** affirms our commitments to each other, working together to make a difference, and in fulfilling our purpose. Make no mistake about it, the world around us is changing at an ever-increasing rate, and we, like all successful schools and communities, must continue to grow, change, and improve as we navigate through our amazing journey together. As a school and community, it is essential we welcome these challenges in efforts to continue to construct our own future and successes for our Saydel Community. Finally, I want to extend an open invitation to get involved in our united work. If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions, please reach out to us.

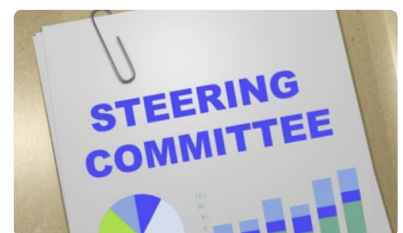
Go out and make it a great year! GO EAGLES!

Yours in Service,
Todd A. Martin, Saydel CSD Superintendent

Saydel CSD Strategic Plan

Saydel CSD Facilities and Grounds Steering Committee

WE NEED YOU! The district is seeking open minded community members and business owners to actively participate on the Saydel Facilities and Ground Steering Committee. The charge for the committee is to identify projects, establish fiscal scope, and strategize on a possible bond referendum in 2026 to achieve the goals of the master plan and ultimately the mission and vision of our district. If you are interested in this important work, we would encourage you to submit your name for consideration using the link below. THANK YOU!



Summertime for SRO Deputy Worrall



2025-26 School Calendar

Confereces: Parents/Guardians will receive regular, ongoing communications as outlined in our Saydel CSD Communication Expectations. Parent/Teacher Conference schedules will be arranged and communicated at the building levels.

Total Hours: 1092 (1080 hours min. State requirement)

***Inclement Weather/Make-Up Days:** Make-up days will be added to the end of the school year.

Attendance trends remained steady. Our Eagles Nest program served 50–64 students each Friday,

providing a safe and supportive space for enrichment and care.

Staff Attendance

Staff absences decreased by 557 this year, reflecting improved wellness and resulting in greater instructional consistency.

Hiring & Retention

We hired 23 new staff members in 2023–24 and 13 more in 2024–25—strong signs that Saydel is attracting and keeping top talent.

Nutrition & Food Services

We ensured food security and access through:

- Distribution of 2,533 take-home meals via our partnership with the Food Bank of Iowa

Academic Achievement Highlights

English Language Arts (ELA)

- District-wide proficiency rose to 67%, up 10% from the prior year
- Several grade levels exceeded the state average of 71%
- Matched cohort growth showed significant gains, including a 34% increase in 4th grade

Math

- District-wide math proficiency rose to 60%, the highest since Iowa's test redesign in 2019
- 3rd grade scored a remarkable 83% proficiency
- Cohort growth showed substantial gains across several grade levels

Special Education Growth

Our students with IEPs made strong gains:

- 84% showed growth, with 38% exceeding a year's growth
- 81% of students with math goals improved, and 40% exceeded a year's growth
- Students with behavioral IEPs had 21 proficient test scores

These results reflect the power of our inclusive instructional systems and targeted support.

This year, we're setting the bar even higher. Our goals are:

- **100%** of students with IEPs make at least a year's growth
- **50%** exceed a year's growth on ISASP
- **100%** of IEP goals met by each student's annual meeting

We're proud of the work that's been done and excited for what's ahead. Here's to another year of meaningful growth and inclusive learning!

English Learner (EL) Progress

Among 115 English Learners:

- 18 students exited EL services after scoring proficient in all tested areas
- Dozens of students showed growth of one level or more in reading, writing, listening, and speaking

These trends reflect strong language acquisition and academic development.

ELL Momentum and Post-Secondary Readiness

As we gear up for the 2025–26 school year, we're excited to share some impactful changes that will support our students academically, linguistically, and in their post-secondary planning.

One area of focused celebration is the momentum we've built within our **English Language Learners (ELL)** program. This summer, the ELL team collaborated to establish meaningful goals focused on student growth and success. At the district level, our target is that all identified ELL students will grow at least one proficiency level in two or more domains on the ELPA21 assessment, and all students will maintain their current proficiency levels each year.

Each building has also set specific ELL goals to track student progress and celebrate growth:

- **Cornell Elementary:** 29% (12 students) in grades 1–4 will exit ELL services by the end of the school year
- **Woodside Middle School:** 31% (8 students) will exit based on ELPA21 scores.
- **Saydel High School:** 34% (9 students) will exit by year's end.

These goals reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting multilingual learners and our belief that, with the right resources, every student can thrive.

We are also excited to further develop **Saydel's District Career & Academic Plan (DCAP)**. This plan will focus on exposing students to career pathways earlier in their educational journey, while helping our middle and high school students align their courses and training with postsecondary goals. Through the DCAP and students' **Individual Career & Academic Plans (ICAPs)**, we will ensure every student has the tools and guidance to explore, plan, and prepare for success beyond high school.

Continuous Improvement: Our Foundation for Success

Our academic success is built on intentional systems and deep investment in instructional excellence.

Key components of our continuous improvement strategy include:

- Weekly professional learning clusters focused on high-impact instructional strategies
- Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) guiding data-informed decisions and supporting teachers.
- Regular classroom observations and feedback loops
- Targeted interventions through Reading Recovery, Literacy Lessons, and Heroes programs
- Support from NIET (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching) to grow collective leadership and instructional quality

We're creating a culture where continuous learning, reflection, and growth are the norm for both students and staff.

This year, our focus will be implementation of our high-quality instructional materials. Through the support of ILT, cluster, and classroom-based follow-up, our goal is to maximize the potential of standards-aligned, rigorous curricular content through instructional excellence and student ownership to help our students continue to achieve at high levels. We celebrate the growth of our students from the 2024-25 school year and look forward to the growth we will see in the year ahead!

What Are People Saying?

Surveys show strong community support for the 4-day week:

- Parents appreciated more quality time at home and expanded Friday enrichment offerings.
- Students reported feeling less stressed and more focused during school days.
- Staff cited improved wellness, collaboration, and morale.

What Parents Are Saying

Here's what parents and guardians shared in our April survey:

- *My son has brightened up and has more focus on school when he's there.*
- *It has greatly improved my children's outlook on school and allows for more rest.*
- *It's been a blessing to schedule appointments without missing school.*
- *My family has been able to spend more time together on Fridays.*
- *This year was amazing—please keep the 4-day week!*
- *We love the 4-day school week and hope it continues into 2025–26.*

What Students Are Saying

Students had plenty to say, too—and their enthusiasm stood out:

- *Please never take this away—this is the best thing to ever exist.*
- *The 4-day week helps me spend more time with family and get homework done.*
- *I've had more energy and motivation to get my work done and get to school.*
- *I like school a lot more now.*
- *I love it—it helps with everything.*
- *It works well because school can be very stressful. Having a day to relax is very nice.*
- *My grades have improved, and I feel more balanced.*

Looking Ahead: Building Momentum

As we enter Year 2 of the 4-day school week, we will:

- Expand enrichment offerings on Fridays through Saydel Community Ed
- Continue investing in high-quality instruction, coaching, and intervention
- Use data and community feedback to inform decisions
- Communicate early and clearly about calendar changes
- Remain committed to our mission: serving every student's unique learning needs
- Continue investing in professional learning and leadership development
- Monitor and celebrate progress as we work toward our academic goals

Our focus remains simple: High-quality teaching and learning, every day, in every classroom. Thank you for your continued trust, belief, and support. Together, we're building a stronger, more flexible, and more student-centered school system.

With gratitude,

Saydel Community School District Leadership Team

Message From Your School Board President

By Gary Christensen II, School Board President

Saydel Community,

So we will be welcoming students back into the classrooms for another year. The beginning of the year brings many opportunities for students to participate and get involved in athletics and clubs. Back to school also offers many opportunities for parents, guardians, and community members to get involved as well. As a district we have several wonderful organizations that help our students reach their full potential.



Each of these organizations is always looking for fresh faces, new ideas, and willing hands to help with their work. The Cornell PTO is a great way for parents to get introduced to the districts, from the teachers and staff at Cornell, to their proud Principal, and Associate Principal. They provide service throughout the year and have a couple of big events that are volunteer driven. The Woodside PTO continues the service of the Cornell PTO at the middle school and is a growing organization that has a bright future. Our athletics department and music department have excellent Booster Organizations. Through the hard work and efforts of the Athletic Booster and Music Boosters, our students receive support and supplies to make their participation more meaningful.

Any and all of these organizations would welcome any support they would receive, whether in the form of volunteers and volunteer hours, or from sponsorships and donations. Your help will directly benefit the students of the buildings and activities in a positive way.

Finally, if you are interested in attending, the District Board of Directors meet in a regular session on the second Monday of the month, typically at 6:00 PM. Speaking on behalf of the Board, we would enjoy having you join us. Thanks so much for your support and here is to a fantastic year!

Go Eagles!

District to Implement Student Fees Following Board Approval

To help cover rising costs, the Saydel Board of Education approved implementing student textbook fees at its March 10, 2025 meeting. This fee will start in the 2025-26 school year. It will help the school district keep important programs and materials in use. The district will look at fees each year to make sure they are fair and clear. Families may still be charged technology fees if school devices are misused and library fines if books are not returned.



Why Student Fees?

Like many school systems across the state, Saydel Schools is facing budget challenges due to stagnant funding, inflation, lack of new residential construction and increasing operational expenses. After careful evaluation, administration recommended student fees as a measure to

preserve education opportunities while maintaining fiscal responsibility. A textbook fee is authorized by Iowa Code Section 301.1 and is utilized by most districts.

“We remain committed to providing an exceptional educational experience to all students,” said Board President Gary Christensen II. “These fees help ensure we continue to support classroom learning.”

What the Fees Will Support

Student fees will help offset the cost of:

- Textbooks
- Electronic textbooks
- Supplementary instructional materials
- Software used for instruction
- Workbooks

Fee amounts will vary by building and will be set each Spring before the start of the next school year.

Waiver and Reduction Options Available

The district understands that fees may place a financial strain on some families. To ensure equitable access for all students, waiver and reduction options will be available for families who qualify under federal income guidelines.

- A fee waiver is required and is currently part of the student registration process.
- A family's eligibility for free or reduced fees will be determined using the household income survey, which helps the district assess need based on income levels.

“Our priority is to keep opportunities open for every student,” said Amber Ray, Executive Director of Business and Operations. “Families facing financial hardship will be able to utilize the waiver and eligibility process to possibly reduce or eliminate the fees.”

What's Next

In early October, families will receive detailed information including:

- Fee schedules by building
- Payment instructions and timelines
- Waiver and reduction processes
- Frequently asked questions

“This decision supports our commitment to sustaining the high-quality programs our families expect,” said Traci Lust, Executive Director of Schools. “We thank the community for their continued support.”

Saydel Transitions To Infinite Campus

By Bill Gruman, Director of Technology

Infinite Campus is a comprehensive student information system used by many school districts around the state, and especially in the metro area. Saydel Community Schools is transitioning

from PowerSchool to Infinite Campus for the 2025-26 school year.

Infinite Campus provides a centralized platform where parents can access real-time information about their child's education, including grades, attendance, assignments, schedules, and communication from teachers and school staff. The system is designed to keep families informed and engaged in their child's academic progress throughout the school year.

One of the most valuable features for parents is the Campus Parent portal, which is accessible via web or mobile app. This portal allows parents to monitor their child's performance, view report cards, check for missing assignments, and receive notifications about important school updates. The messaging feature also supports direct communication with teachers, helping parents stay involved with their students' education.

Infinite Campus helps create a strong home-to-school connection by promoting transparency and timely access to critical information. Parents can support their child's success by regularly reviewing the portal, encouraging good study habits, and collaborating with teachers. By using Infinite Campus effectively, families and schools work together to provide a more supportive and informed learning environment.

Introducing Saydel's New Technology Director

Saydel welcomed Bill Gruman as the new Director of Technology, where he is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of all areas of technology. He directs and provides leadership for information technology functions including user technical support, vendor relationships, data center/server administration, application development, classroom integration, network management/support, project management and budget development. Gruman also coordinates technology planning and collaboration with district stakeholders.



Gruman began working at Saydel June 9. Prior to his position at Saydel, he was a long-time teacher and coach, and most recently the Technology Integrationist at Grinnell-Newburg Community Schools from 2015-2025.

Bill received his Bachelor of Arts degree in math and physics education and a Masters of Arts in Instructional Technology from the University of Northern Iowa.

Gruman resides in Grinnell with his wife Sandra and his daughter Emily (12). They also have three grown children and a daughter-in-law. Gruman is active in a number of community organizations, including 23 years as a volunteer firefighter and long-time Scouting America volunteer.

Back To School Reminders From The Activities Office

By Levi Hunerdosse, Activities Director

As we prepare to kick off another exciting school year, I want to take a moment to remind all families with students in grades 7–12 to complete their **activity registration** on the **Bound** website. This registration is required for participation in all athletics.

Before the first practices begin in early August, all student-athletes must have the following completed and uploaded to their Bound profile:

- Current athletic physical form (expires yearly)
- Concussion form (must be done yearly at the start of the school year)
- Medical release form (must be done yearly at the start of the school year)



Completing this ahead of time ensures your student is eligible to participate from day one and helps our programs run smoothly.

You can also find full team competition schedules on Bound throughout the year to stay informed and support our Eagles!

For fall program-specific questions, feel free to reach out directly to our fall head coaches and activity leaders:

- **Volleyball** – Sam Kluesner: kluesnersamantha@saydel.net
- **Girls Tennis** – Gavin Jensen: jensengavin@saydel.net
- **Football** – Saxon Dolan: dolansaxon@saydel.net
- **Cross Country** – Marcey Norland: norlandmarcey@saydel.net
- **Marching Band** – Stephen Kellar: kellarstephen@saydel.net
- **Color Guard** – Jake Jennings: jenningsjake@saydel.net
- **Cheerleading** – Haley Pagliai: pagliaihaley@saydel.net

We're looking forward to a strong start to the 2025-26 school year and can't wait to see our students learning, leading, and competing with pride!

Go Eagles!



Saydel Back To School Walking Tacos Staff Lunch

Saydel CSD is kicking off the new school year with a walking taco lunch for the teachers and staff. If you are able to donate any of the following items we would appreciate it very much! All items can be dropped off at the Saydel District Office (5740 NE 14th Street) by Monday, August 18 by 3 pm. Thank you for helping our staff kick off the 2025-26 school year!

📧 signupgenius.com

Saydel Homecoming Set for Sept. 26

The Saydel Homecoming Parade will be held on Friday, Sept. 26 beginning at 1 PM. If you would like to donate any candy, green/gold necklaces, puppy treats or swag to be handed out during the parade, you can drop off donations at the Saydel District Office, 5740 NE 14th Street, between 8 am and 4 pm. Thank you to everyone that helps make this tradition a success for our community!



Letter from Cornell Elementary School

By Brian Vaughan, Principal

It is with great enthusiasm that I welcome you to the 2026 school year at Cornell Elementary! As we prepare to open our doors, I want to emphasize the laser-like focus our dedicated staff brings every day to being thoroughly planned and prepared. This daily intentionality is what drives us to live out our mission: **To serve the unique learning needs of each and every student.**



Our team collaborates closely to design lessons and supports that thoughtfully address the individual strengths and challenges of our students, ensuring every child receives the tailored instruction they deserve. Alongside this, we continue building on our commitment to social-emotional learning through the RULER approach, helping students recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate their emotions—creating a safe and compassionate learning environment for all.

As your proud principal for the past ten years, I'm excited to build on the great progress our students have made and to continue challenging them to grow as thinkers and problem solvers. Cornell faces many challenges, but with our staff's unwavering preparation and dedication, great things keep happening here.

Thank you for your partnership and trust. Together, we will make this year another successful one for every Little Eagle.

New Teachers At Cornell Elementary School

Lilly Spurgeon

Hello! My name is Lily Spurgeon, a recent graduate from UNI. I am originally from Boone, Iowa, and I am the youngest of four girls and an aunt to two, with three more on the way! Some of my hobbies include volleyball, cooking, and thrifting. I am so excited to be a part of Cornell's welcoming community. I knew it was the place for me, walking out of my interview! I can't wait to be a part of this team, my first year teaching!



Carlie Mauss

Hello! My name is Carlie Mauss, and I am thrilled to join the Cornell community as a first grade teacher this school year. I recently graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Elementary Education, and I am excited to see this life-long dream of being a teacher become a reality. I grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, but fell in love with the Des Moines area when I started college. In my free time, I love to read, spend time outdoors, and visit coffee shops with my family and friends. I look forward to becoming a part of your village and making sure our students feel safe, welcome, and supported while they learn.

Samantha Nolte

I am originally from Northeast Iowa. I graduated from the University of Northern Iowa in 2010 and am currently working on my Master's of Social Work from Grand Canyon University. My husband and I have three kids, Thea (10), William (8) and Shae (6). My hobbies include all things Spanish, mental and physical wellness, reading, spending time with family and friends, and travel. Having been in the district for eight years, I am especially looking forward to working with our youngest Eagles and becoming a part of the Cornell team.

Soy del noreste de Iowa. Me gradué de la Universidad del Norte de Iowa en 2010 y actualmente estoy trabajando en mi licenciatura en trabajo social de la Universidad Grand Canyon. Mi esposo y

yo tenemos tres hijos: Thea (10), William (8) y Shae (6). En mi tiempo libre me encanta todo lo relacionado con el español, el bienestar físico y mental, la lectura, pasar tiempo con la familia y los amigos, y viajar. Después de haber estado en el distrito durante 8 años, estoy especialmente deseando trabajar con nuestros más jóvenes Águilas y convertirme en una parte del equipo de Cornell.



Morgan Temple

My name is Morgan Temple, and I am excited to join the Cornell Elementary staff. I bring 13 years of experience as a special education teacher, previously working at Janesville Consolidated School District and Central Elementary in the Nevada Community School District. My husband, Travis, and I live in Ankeny, IA with our two children, Nash (4) and Summer (1). In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family, swimming, watching reality TV, and getting lost in a good book. I look forward to meeting new students, staff, and community members, and I am eager to use my experience supporting students with learning gaps to help every student succeed.



Hallie Whitten

My name is Hallie Whitten and I'm so excited to be joining Cornell! I recently moved to the Des Moines area and I enjoy trying new restaurants and coffee shops. In my free time, I like biking, hiking, and reading a good book. I'm looking forward to making relationships with Cornell staff and students and finding my place in the Saydel community.



Samantha Behne



Hi! My name is Samantha Behne, and I'm so excited to be joining the second grade team at Cornell Elementary. I grew up in Jefferson, Iowa, and graduated from the University of Northern Iowa in 2023. For the past two years, I've been teaching second grade in Waterloo, and I'm thrilled to continue working with this amazing age group. In my free time I love reading and taking my two dogs, Lizzie and Pete, on walks with my fiancé, Gage. I'm really looking forward to getting to know everyone and being part of the Cornell community.

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Cody Emery

I'm excited to be part of the Cornell team. I come from a background of Youth Development and non-profit group, and recently completed my Master of Teaching. My passion lies in creating inclusive and engaging spaces for all students. I grew up in a close-knit family in Ottumwa, Iowa, but have been working with a Northeastern school community for the last 5 years. Outside of school, I love creating art, spending time outdoors, and traveling with my brother and two sisters. I'm looking forward to building strong relationships with students, families, and staff and contributing to the supportive culture here at Cornell. Looking forward to a great year together.



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Along with our new staff, you will also notice some changes within our current staff.

They are:

- Ms. Jensen will be teaching first grade
- Ms. Hauschen will be teaching third grade
- Ms. Daniels will be teaching third grade

Cornell Back To School Night

Cornell will have our annual Back To School Night on August 21, for kindergarten through 4th grade students. Back To School Night will be held from 3-5:30 PM. This time is for our students to come in and find their room, where they will be seated on day one, put their materials away, and say hello to their teacher.

Families/students are now able to learn who their teacher is by accessing their Infinite Campus account. Finally, while you are at school this night it is also a great opportunity to collect

information on how you can be part of and/or support our phenomenal PTO.

Incoming kindergarten Need-to-Know- students/families are asked to set up a 20-minute time for the child to come in and do pre-assessing on August 6. See the information below for signing up. Class lists will be assembled based on the assessments, and Back To School Night for KINDERGARTEN will be on August 21 from 3:00-5:30 PM.

Please be sure to sign up for a time using the link or QR code below:

Use this booking link in electronic media, like your website, school app or an emailed newsletter:

<https://www.schoolbookings.net/code/jwnut>

Please note- You are signing up for a time and NOT a specific teacher



PRESCHOOL INFORMATION

Incoming 3-year-old families will be contacted directly by Ms. Singletary to set up times for home visits between August 25 and August 29 (Our 3-year-olds are NOT able to begin school until this meeting has taken place).

Incoming 4-year-old families will be contacted by either Ms. Fleenor or Ms. McClain to set up times for a mandatory home visit between August 25 and August 29 (Our 4-year-olds are NOT able to begin school until this meeting has taken place).

[Preschool Handbook](#)

SCHOOL START DATES

- We are looking forward to seeing ALL students in Kindergarten-Fourth Grade on August 25.
- We are looking forward to seeing ALL Preschool students on September 2.

SCHOOL OPERATING HOURS

Cornell Office Hours: 7:45 AM-4:15 PM

Doors for students open 7:50-8:05 AM

School ends at 3:35 PM

Preschool Hours: AM session 8:15-11:15 AM, PM session 12:15-3:15 PM, Monday-Thursday

IMPORTANT DATES

August 1- Log into Infinite Campus and learn your teacher

August 6- Kindergarten Pre-assessment Day (Cornell Library)

August 21- Back-to-School Night (kindergarten-4th grade)- 3:00-5:30

August 25- FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

September 1- NO SCHOOL- Labor Day

September 2- FIRST DAY OF PRESCHOOL

Letter from Woodside Middle School

By Pat Rial, Principal

I hope this message finds you all enjoying a safe, relaxing, and fun summer. As we approach the start of the 2025-26 school year, I wanted to reach out with some important updates and to welcome you back to what I know will be a fantastic year at Woodside Middle School.



First, we are thrilled to announce and welcome several new staff members who will be joining our Woodside family this year:

- **Teddy Palmer**, School Counselor
- **Justin Jacobs**, Physical Education Teacher
- **Sarah Darland**, Special Education Teacher
- **Micaiah Krutsinger**, Vocal Music Teacher
- **Mackenzie Ireland**, ELL Teacher

Each of these educators brings a wealth of knowledge, energy, and dedication to supporting our students' academic and social-emotional growth. Please join me in giving them a warm welcome when you see them at school events or in the community.

Additionally, please note that **our school start time will be changing this year to 7:40 AM**. The **doors will open at 7:25 AM** to allow students to enter the building, get settled, and prepare for a great day of learning.

Our **Back To School Day/Night will be held on August 21, from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM** here at Woodside. This is an excellent opportunity for students and families to meet their teachers, tour the building, organize supplies, and ease any first-day nerves. We strongly encourage you to attend if you are able.

At Woodside, we believe in working together to create a positive, safe, and engaging learning environment where **all students feel supported and challenged to reach their full potential**. This year, we will continue to focus on building strong relationships with our students and families, supporting effective teaching practices, and celebrating the many successes that happen each day.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. It truly takes all of us working together to make Woodside Middle School the special place it is. Please continue to watch your email and our school website for additional back-to-school updates in the coming weeks.

Enjoy the remaining days of summer with your families, and as always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

New Teachers at Woodside Middle School

Justin Jacobs

Hi, my name is Coach Justin Jacobs, and I'm excited to join the Woodside Middle School staff this upcoming year as the 5th–8th grade Physical Education teacher.

A little about me:

- I have a beautiful wife, Marissa. We met in high school and were high school sweethearts—we've now been married for over two and a half years. Fun fact: she's a Saydel graduate! My love for Saydel runs deep.
- This will be my fifth year serving in the Saydel Community School District as a coach and now an educator. I've coached varsity baseball, boys' and girls' junior high basketball, and now junior high football.
- I completed my undergraduate studies at Iowa State University and am a proud Cyclone fan.
- I was fortunate to complete my student teaching right here at Woodside and at Cornell. During that time, I had the joy of building meaningful connections with many of your students.
- My teaching philosophy is rooted in my faith in my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I strive to lead by example and to show students the power of serving others.



This year, I look forward to strengthening relationships with students and creating a family-like atmosphere where they feel supported and encouraged to succeed. My goal is to help students not only stay active in class, but to become physically literate individuals prepared for life beyond the gym. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be part of this school community and can't wait to serve. Go Eagles!



Mackenzie Ireland

Hello! My name is Mackenzie Ireland. I graduated with a degree in education from the University of Northern Iowa and completed my student teaching in Ecuador and here at Woodside. I'm excited to return as the teacher for the English Language Learning program and to support the students and families of Saydel! Outside of school, I enjoy traveling, rock climbing, hiking, and spending time with friends and family. I look forward to getting to know you all soon!

¡Hola! Me llamo Mackenzie Ireland. Me gradué en Educación por la Universidad del Norte de Iowa y completé mis prácticas

docentes en Ecuador y aquí en Woodside. ¡Estoy emocionada de regresar como profesora del programa de Aprendizaje del Inglés y de apoyar a los estudiantes y familias de Saydel! Fuera de la escuela, disfruto viajar, escalar, hacer senderismo y pasar tiempo con amigos y familiares. ¡Espero conocerlos pronto!

Habari! Jina langu ni Mackenzie Ireland. Nilihitimu na shahada ya elimu kutoka Chuo Kikuu cha Northern Iowa na nikamaliza kufundisha mwanafunzi wangu katika Ekuado na hapa Woodside. Nimefurahi kurudi kama mwalimu kwa ajili ya programu ya Kujifunza Lugha ya Kiingereza na kuunga mkono wanafunzi na familia za Saydel! Nje ya shule, ninafurahia kusafiri, kukwea miamba, kupanda milima, na kutumia wakati pamoja na marafiki na familia. Natarajia kuwajua nyote hivi karibuni!

Taylor Darland

Hello! My name is Taylor Darland and I will be working with 5th-8th grade students at Woodside Middle School. I moved to Saydel two years ago and I am so excited to teach in such an amazing community. I went to Iowa State University to get my degree in education and I am currently back in school to get my Master's degree. When I am not teaching I love to be outside and active with my husband, daughter, and our dog. I love to play any kind of game and can be very competitive. This summer I have enjoyed reading and spending time with my family. I have been teaching for six years and I cannot wait for a great year at Woodside.



Teddy Palmer

Hello fellow Eagles, my name is Teddy Palmer, and I am your new Woodside Middle School counselor! I got my masters in professional school counseling and clinical mental health counseling from Buena Vista University. My wife, Olivia, and I live on the south side of Ankeny with our 15 month old son Walker and our two dogs. In our spare time, we love to go watch baseball, softball, and basketball. We also enjoy family bike rides and spending time at the pool! Personally, outside of school; I enjoy working out, participating in CrossFit competitions, and cycling (including RAGBRAI). I can't wait for the school year to get started and to kick off the new year with Saydel! Go Eagles!



Micaiah Krutsinger

Hello everyone! My name is Micaiah Krutsinger, and I'm excited to be joining the Saydel community as the new middle school and high school choir director. I graduated from the University of Northern Iowa, where I had the privilege of performing in multiple collegiate and community choirs/ensembles, directing children's theatre productions, being involved in numerous student organizations, and serving in many student leadership positions, including being UNI's Student Body President. Outside of school, I enjoy training for half and full marathons, attending live music and theatre performances, and pursuing additional learning experiences. I'm looking forward to creating a welcoming environment and sharing my



passion for music and education with the students of Saydel. Therefore, I encourage any student to join our music program. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about how your student can participate or how you can support Saydel's music program.

Woodside Student Phone Policy & Guidelines

Phones are not to be used during the school day. Every student is assigned a Yondr Pouch to securely store their phone. While the Yondr Pouch is considered school property, it is each student's responsibility to care for their pouch and ensure it is not lost or damaged.

Examples of damage:



DAILY PROCESS

As students arrive in their first class of the school day, they will:

1. Turn their phone off.
2. Place their phone inside their Pouch and secure it in front of a school staff member.
3. Store their Pouch in their backpack/locker/chromebook case for the day.

At the end of the day, students will open their Pouch, remove their phone, and put their Pouch in a designated bin. Students will pick up their designated pouch each morning.

*Students arriving late or leaving early will pouch/unpouch their phones in the Main Office.

VIOLATIONS

Pouch Damage / Lost Pouch / Using Phone During School

- If a student damages their Yondr Pouch or is caught using their phone, administration or their designee will collect the phone and Pouch, and parents/guardians will be contacted for a required pickup. Consequences may include community service, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, detention, contract, and/or a \$25 fee for a replacement Pouch. Any student who attempts to bypass placing their phone or device in the Yondr Pouch will be subject to disciplinary action.

Examples of damage:

- Deep scratches on the globe and on the green ring around it
- Intentional pen marks on the inside of the Pouch
- Bent pins
- Pin and button not fully recessing, due to pin damage

Forgetting to put the phone in a Pouch

If a student forgets to put their phone in a Yondr Pouch, their phone will be collected, and the administration or designee will communicate home via email/phone call to the parent or guardian of the policy violation. The phone will be returned to the student at dismissal.

If a student consistently forgets or refuses to place their phone in a Yondr Pouch, they will be required to leave their phone in the main office each day. A plan will be implemented to ensure

compliance. All disciplinary actions determined by the administration or their designee will be communicated to the parent or guardian and are subject to change based on the situation.

Letter from Saydel High School

By William Crosby, Principal

We are thrilled to welcome you to another exciting school year at Saydel High School! As we reflect on last year’s progress, we couldn’t be prouder of the tremendous growth and success achieved by our students—personally, academically, and athletically. None of this would be possible without the continued support of our incredible community, and we thank you for showing up and cheering on our students every step of the way.



1. New Student Information System: Infinite Campus

We’ve officially transitioned from PowerSchool to Infinite Campus. This new system will enhance communication, streamline access to important student information, and offer a more user-friendly experience for families. Be sure to check your email for a message from District Registrar Michelle Baack with instructions on how to set up your new Infinite Campus account.

2. Updated School Start Time

To build in time for potential snow days, our school day will begin five minutes earlier this year. Students must be in their classrooms by 7:50 a.m. The end-of-day dismissal remains at 3:25 PM.

Bell Schedule:

School Day		
Period 1		7:50 - 8:37
Period 2		8:40 - 9:27
Advisory		9:30 - 9:55
Period 3		9:58 - 10:45
Period 4		10:48 - 11:35
1st Lunch	1st Lunch	11:35 - 12:05
	Period 5	12:08 - 12:55
2nd Lunch	Period 5	11:38 - 12:25
	2nd Lunch	12:25 - 12:55
Period 6		12:58 - 1:45
Period 7		1:48 - 2:35
Period 8		2:38 - 3:25

3. Continued Cell Phone Policy

We remain committed to fostering a focused and respectful learning environment. Our current cell phone policy will continue: students must keep phones out of reach during instructional time (from bell to bell), either in backpacks or in designated wall holders. This policy supports a new state law prohibiting phone use during instruction. If a student violates this policy, the phone will be held in the office for the remainder of the day. Repeated violations may result in the use of a Yondr pouch—a magnetically locked pouch that allows students to carry, but not access, their phone during the day.



While we hope not to implement a schoolwide Yondr policy, it is an option if misuse becomes widespread. Exceptions will be made for students with specific accommodations (medical needs, IEPs, 504 plans, translation tools, etc.).

4. Student Schedules

Schedules are being finalized and will be available on Infinite Campus. Please note that changes may still occur through August 7. If you notice an issue after that date, contact our Counseling Assistant Leslie Nedved (nedvedleslie@saydel.net), with your requested change and the reason. We'll do our best to accommodate valid requests, though some changes may not be possible due to class size limits or scheduling constraints. Ms. Nedved is available Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 6:00 AM to 4:00 PM. All requests must be made before August 28. No changes will be made after the first week unless they were submitted prior to this deadline.

5. Upcoming Events

- **Back To School Night** -- August 21 | 4:00 – 6:00 PM -- Come meet your teachers and walk through your schedule!
- **First Day of School** -- August 25 | 7:50 AM – 3:25 PM
- **Homecoming Week** -- September 21 – 27 -- One of just two five-day weeks this fall—plan for lots of spirit and fun!
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences** -- October 21 & 23

This year, we're excited to welcome six new staff members to our high school team, while maintaining an outstanding staff retention rate of over 90%! Research shows that high staff retention is a strong indicator of continued school success—and with our dedicated team and engaged community, we are confident that Saydel is on the path to even greater achievements.

We're grateful for your partnership and excited to build on last year's momentum as we begin another amazing year. Thank you for being an essential part of the Saydel High School community. Let's make 2025–26 our best year yet!

New Teachers at Saydel High School

Darian Healy

My name is Darian Healy, and I am the new 9-12 school counselor at Saydel High School! I am so excited to begin my first year in this role at Saydel and join the amazing staff here! I am looking forward to getting to know the students and families within the community. I am here to help support students' academic, social, and emotional needs. I will also be assisting students with post-secondary planning and career readiness. A little bit about me: I am a mom of two, and I have a pet cat named Chloe. I enjoy spending time with my family in my free time, and I also enjoy making crafts! I love scrapbooking, making dollhouses, and reading. I graduated from Iowa State University with a Bachelor's in science then attended Buena Vista University to earn my Professional School Counseling degree. I have experience working with students grades K-12 through individual and small-group counseling, as well as classroom instruction. I chose to become a counselor at Saydel because of the welcoming community and the knowledgeable, inclusive staff. Saydel takes pride in meeting the needs of all students. I became a school counselor to help support students and families and make a positive impact in their lives. I look forward to starting this new school year and getting to know everyone.





Casey McMurray

I am Casey McMurray, the new Work-Based Learning Coordinator. My background includes degrees from the University of Iowa, Drake University, and Central College, and I hold a Doctor of Education in Education Policy and Leadership Studies, two master's degrees in Educational Leadership and School Counseling, and a bachelor's degree in Communication/Theatre with a minor in English. I have a deep commitment to helping students discover their ideal postsecondary paths. I chose Saydel because of my enthusiasm for guiding students toward future success and the strong reputation of our school community.

Outside of work, I enjoy cheering on the Iowa Hawkeyes and North Carolina Tar Heels, traveling, reading, watching Hallmark movies, and spending time with family and friends. My husband Sean and I have two daughters, Quinn, who is beginning her freshman year at Central College, and Delaney, a junior at Bondurant-Farrar High School—as well as two beloved cats, Oreo and Sneaks. My passion for education began during an internship at the Des Moines Playhouse, where I discovered my love for working with students.

Alexis Moslander

My name is Ms. Moslander, and I'm excited to join Saydel as a high school biology teacher. I graduated from The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and have always been passionate about science and helping students explore how it connects to their everyday lives. I chose Saydel because of its close-knit community and strong support for both students and staff. When I'm not in the classroom, I enjoy reading, traveling, and being outdoors. Teaching gives me the chance to inspire curiosity and confidence in my students, and I'm looking forward to a great year ahead.



Bre Suntken

Hi. I'm Bre Suntken and I'm excited to be the new 11–12 iJAG Specialist! I am a graduate of Buena Vista University. After a three-year hiatus, I'm excited to return to a district and community that I love deeply. I am passionate about helping students grow not just academically but as individuals and I'm excited to continue to support students as they develop the skills and confidence needed for life beyond high school. Outside of school, I stay busy and active. I love coaching track, spending time outdoors, and making memories with my family. My husband Kevin and I are proud



parents to two daughters: Pearl (5) and Marlowe (2). Our family also includes two beloved dogs, Chevy, a black lab, and Gus, a German Shorthair Pointer. I am passionate about helping students become better humans and I see my role in iJAG as the ideal opportunity to live out that mission.

Kelly Vondrak

Hi, my name is Kelly Vondrak. My significant other, Bert, and I recently moved to Des Moines after his graduation from law school. I am joining Saydel as an English and Special Education teacher. I chose Saydel because of the positive praise from family members in the area and how warm and welcoming everyone from the school has been to me. I graduated from the University of South Dakota and have been teaching for five years. I became a teacher because of my love for learning and the amazing teachers I had throughout life that helped shape who I am. Outside of school, I am an avid reader, love anything art related, whether it be painting, drawing, or crafting, spending time with friends and family, being entertained by our many nieces and nephews, and traveling. I am very excited for the new school year and to be a part of the Saydel community!



Annual Notices to Parents 2025-26



Saydel District Office

Email: vittirittobeth@saydel.net

Website: www.saydel.k12.ia.us

Location: [5740 Northeast 14th Street, Des Moines, IA, USA](#)

Phone: [515-264-0866](tel:515-264-0866)



Beth Vitiritto

Beth is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters

