



Back to School



A Special Supplement to The Graphic-Advocate

NEW FACES, FAMILIAR PLACES

Meet the new staff at South Central Calhoun CSD

By Tyler Anderson
The Graphic-Advocate Editor

On August 24, all three buildings within the South Central Calhoun Community School District will be open for the first day of classes.

The traditional yellow buses will be on the designated routes to pick up children in the countryside, while some parents drop off their kids at their designated buildings or, in some cases, all three locations of learning. Older students, after getting ready for the day, would jump into their vehicle and make the drive over to their senior high.

On a Monday, students will filter into SCC Elementary School and SCC Middle School of Rockwell City and SCC High School in Lake City, eager to get back into the groove of learning and socializing with old and new friends alike.

Before the first bell rings, the SCC staff has been hard at work to create an environment, balancing the act of keeping COVID-19 at bay and molding young minds.

This year, which has been an interesting year to say the least, seven new instructors will join the fold at South Central Calhoun. Among the seven are a mix of experienced teachers and new faces anxious to help convert students into contributing members of society.

The Graphic-Advocate was able to get in touch with six of the seven teachers at SCC, ahead of the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Courtland Ellis, who will teach

social studies at SCC High School, was unavailable as of press time.

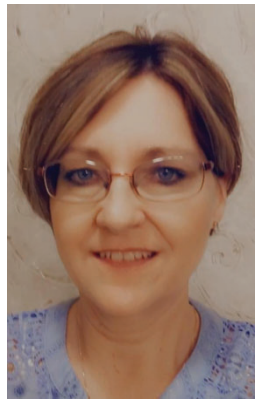
Rhonda Fridley

What is your position with SCC? Strategist I Teacher – Reading and Math.

How many years have you been in your profession? Five years.

What brought you to SCC? My husband and I moved back for family. I taught in a large school last year, and am glad to be back to a small town, small atmosphere school. I am excited to get the year started with a closer, more personal relationship with my students. SCC provides that to me and more. I hope that what I can offer SCC equals what they are about to offer me.

What's your favorite part of what you do? The thing I love most about teaching are the kids. I get the opportunity to interact with a great bunch, and I learn as much from them as they do from me. I love that I can help them understand the content of our course work and am passionate about helping them to make connections in both schoolwork and home life.



Rhonda Fridley

Kristina Krukow

What is your position with SCC? Middle School and High School Family and Consumer Science Teacher.

How many years have you been in your profession? This is my 10th year teaching.

What brought you to SCC? Teaching at SCC gives me the opportunity to work in the same district I live in. I was at East Sac County School District for the last 9 years. My four year old will be in preschool this fall and I wanted the opportunity to be closer to home and spend less time on the road. I look forward to working with and getting to know the students and staff at SCC.

What's your favorite part of what you do? I love all that Family and Consumer Sciences (formally Home Economics) has to offer. FCS is more than just sewing and cooking. It is life skills that students can use no matter where their life takes them. Whether they head off to a technical, two or four year college, or they start their careers, students can use the skills they learn in my classroom everyday. I also like to see the 'aha' moments that students have, especially if it is something that they might have struggled with and it suddenly clicks for them. It makes



Kristina Krukow

teaching that much more rewarding!

Alexandra (Alex) Lerch

What is your position with SCC? Three-Year-Old Preschool Teacher.

How many years have you been in your profession? This is my very first year!

What brought you to SCC? It was truly a stroke of luck! I love small towns, and I am from Iowa, and nothing beats Iowa. I met the Preschool team when I interviewed, and I adored all of them immediately! Every visit, I met new people, and all of them were so kind and welcoming. I started by applying for all of Iowa and Missouri. I'm so lucky to have been welcomed into the SCC family.

What's your favorite part of what you do? I love the stories I get to take home every day. Each question, story and a-ha moment is why I do this, and I love telling stories about my classes (while keeping the confidentiality, of course). I truly love to watch each kiddo grow and learn throughout the year, and I love being able to help them along the way.



Alexandra (Alex) Lerch

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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Justin Moody

What is your position with SCC? Elementary School Counselor.

How many years have you been in your profession? This is my first year professionally.

What brought you to SCC? I grew up in Manson and always knew I wanted to come back to the small town culture. I loved my interview at SCC and jumped at the opportunity to join this awesome community.

What's your favorite part of what you do?



Justin Moody

My favorite part about this job is the unique position I am in to help students with their academics, social and emotional wellbeing, and learning about possible careers. I also really love the interactions I get to have with the teachers, administrators, and parents throughout the year.

Jennifer Morrissey

What is your position with SCC? Third Grade Teacher.

How many years have you been in your profession? I previously taught in Eagle Grove for seven years.

What brought



Jennifer Morrissey

you to SCC? My husband and I live in Manson, and I knew I wanted to work closer to where we live. I had been commuting about 50 minutes one-way to Eagle Grove for the last three years. I'm so excited to have the opportunity to teach in this area and become more involved in the community.

What's your favorite part of what you do? My favorite part of teaching is seeing children solve problems. I love when kids are collaborative and begin to work together to solve whatever problem is at hand.

Emily Schroer

What is your position with SCC? 8th Grade Language Arts and Reading.

How many years have you been in your profession? This will be my first year teaching.

What brought you to SCC? I grew up in Glidden and had friends from the SCC area. I spent a lot of time in the area and when the

position became available, I felt that I would fit in great with the community and the school. I feel so welcome in the school and the district and I am so excited to get started.

What's your favorite part of what you do? I really

enjoy getting to know the students and watch them grow into themselves as writers. Middle school can be a really hard time for some students and being able to watch them grow out of their shell and become their own person is amazing to watch!



Emily Schroer

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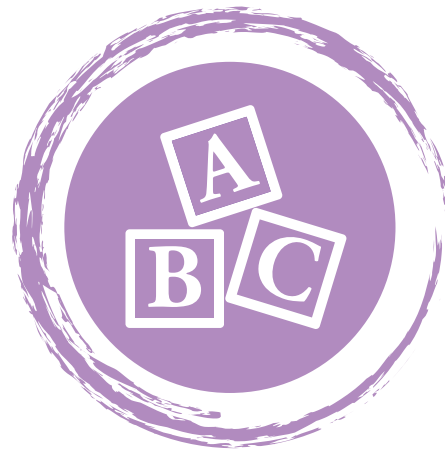
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SOUTH CENTRAL CALHOUN'S RETURN TO LEARN PLAN

Highlights of the SCC Elementary, SCC Middle School and SCC High School Return To Learn plans
For the full details of each buildings' Return To Learn Plans, visit <http://www.scc.k12.ia.us/r2l.html>.



BUS

- Families are encouraged to use alternative transportation.
- Students will always ride the same bus.
- Students will have assigned seats based on homeroom.
- Drivers will be required to wear masks and face shields.
- Windows will remain open as weather allows.
- Seats and handrails will be sanitized after each route.
- Students will be required to use hand sanitizer as they board and get off the bus.

PRESCHOOL (at SCC High School)

- Home visits will not be conducted this fall. Individual classroom visits will be done instead. Staff will meet students at the door. Parents will not be allowed in.
- Mrs. Lamaak's class will enter through the west doors at the bottom of the stairs leading to her room.
- Mrs. Bixenstine's class will enter through the south doors to the main building.
- Students will wash their hands upon arrival.
- Staff will take student temperatures.
- No meals will be served family style.
- All snacks will be individually pre-packaged and distributed by an adult.

ARRIVAL

SCC ELEMENTARY:

- A staff member will be at the end of the sidewalk to supervise TK-3rd grade drop-off as well as arrival of bikers and walkers.
- Preschoolers who do not ride the bus must enter through the preschool doors.

SCC MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- A supervisor will ensure students do not congregate in groups.

SCC HIGH SCHOOL:

- A supervisor will ensure students do not congregate in groups of more than 10.

ALL SCHOOLS:

- Parents will not be allowed to walk their child into the building.
- Doors will be propped open to minimize contact with door handles.
- There will be no routine screenings for fevers of students or staff.

DISMISSAL

- Students will remain in their classrooms until it is time for their group to leave.

COMMON AREAS


SCC ELEMENTARY:

- Students will walk in single file lines on the right side of the hallway. Vinyl lines will indicate where to walk.
- Hallway drinking fountains will be disabled and covered.
- Students will bring water bottles from home and fill them in their classrooms. Water bottles will be sent home weekly to be washed and returned.


SCC MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Students will walk in single file lines on the right side of the hallway. Dotted lines will indicate where to walk.
- Efforts will be made to stagger class dismissal.
- Hallway drinking fountains will be disabled and covered.
- Students will bring water bottles from home and fill them in their classrooms. Water bottles will be sent home weekly to be washed and returned.
- Occupancy numbers will be posted on restroom doors. Students will be asked to wait outside restrooms until they're able to enter.

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GUESTS

SCC ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOLS:

- Family members and other visitors are not allowed at this time.
- Parents picking up/dropping off students outside of the regular time should call the office rather than enter the building.
- Guest speakers and other presentations will be done via technology, as will field trips.
- Anyone who must enter will be subjected to temperature checks and must wear a mask.

SCC HIGH SCHOOL:

- Family members and other visitors are discouraged at this time.
- Parents picking up/dropping off students outside of the regular time should call the office rather than enter the building.
- Guest speakers and other presentations will be done via technology.
- Volunteers will not be used at this time.



RECESS

SCC ELEMENTARY:

- Only one grade will go to recess at a time.
- Staff will ensure students are not congregating in groups.
- Students will walk directly back to their classroom once recess ends.
- In case of inclement weather, teachers will provide an alternative in their respective classrooms.
- Hallways and gyms will not be utilized.

SCC MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Staff will ensure students are not congregating in groups.
- Students will walk directly back to their classroom once recess ends.
- In case of inclement weather, one section may utilize the gym at a time. The gym will be used on a rotating basis.



BREAKFAST/LUNCH

SCC ELEMENTARY:

- Each class will have an assigned table for breakfast.
- Lunch numbers will switch to a scan system.
- Lunch times will be staggered so only one class will be in line at a time.
- Students will line up in a pre-determined and consistent order.
- During lunch, students will not sit in groups larger than 10.

SCC MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Students will sit every other seat.
- Lunch times will be staggered so only one class will be in line at a time.
- Students will be able to sit outside, weather permitting.
- Students will speak their lunch numbers.
- Grab and go meals may be utilized.

SCC HIGH SCHOOL:

- Breakfast is to be eaten in a student's first period class.
- Two lunch periods will be utilized.
- Lunch tables will be set up in the lunchroom and auditorium lobby.
- Students will find a table to sit and wait for their class group and/or table to be called to the hallway to receive food.
- Students will scan and/or speak their lunch numbers.
- Students will sit in groups of less than 10.
- Alternate sites to eat lunch may be used.

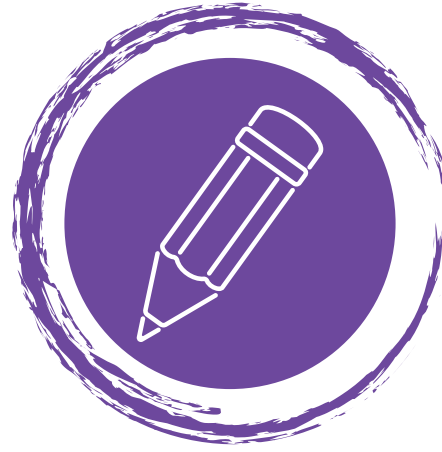
ALL SCHOOLS:

- Students will not pick up their trays or utensils, they will be served by a food service staff member.
- There will be no salad bar or self-serve items.



MASKS

- SCC students will not be required to wear face masks, but are highly encouraged to do so.



HIGH SCHOOL SPECIFIC

SCHOOL SCHEDULE:

- The high school will use an eight block period with each class being approximately 42 minutes in length.
- Students will be in attendance everyday.
- A student will be assigned at least six classes, so there may be a study hall built into their day.
- Ninth period will still be on the schedule and students, not assigned to a teacher, could use this time as a study hall.

COLLEGE CLASSES:

- Classes taught at SCC High School will meet every day.
- If a student is enrolled for an online college class, they will need to work on those classes during their time on the schedule and meet the weekly assignment goals set by their instructor. If a student does not have an assigned period for their online class, they will need to work on it outside of the school day.

BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:

- Weightlifting: Students may access the wellness center under staff supervision. Equipments and area will need to be sanitized after workouts are completed.
- Jazz band/vocal music groups: Teachers will develop a schedule and procedures for these activities.
- Athletic and co-curricular activities will follow guidelines established by the respective governing organization. (IHSAA, IGHSAU, etc.)

DISTANCE LEARNING:

- Staff may develop a distance learning component for their lessons. Should the school shut down again by the State of Iowa, staff will be prepared to teach the State Standards to all students in a distance learning model.



ILL STAFF MEMBERS

- Staff with fevers of 100.4 or higher are required to stay/go home.
- Staff must be fever free for 24 hours without medication before returning.
- A staff member who has been exposed, is exhibiting symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 must consult with the school nurse and administration about if they may continue to work.

ILL STUDENTS

- First aid supplies (bandaids and ice packs) will be distributed to each classroom.
- Students who complain of symptoms and/or are suspected to have fevers will be sent to the nurses office for evaluation.
- Students who are sent home will be required to stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- Students who have been exposed, are exhibiting symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19 must follow the current protocols provided by Public Health to determine when they may return to school.

ATTENDANCE

- If parents choose not to send their children to school due to COVID-19 concerns, they must:
 - Notify the principal of their decision.
 - Ensure their child completes and returns the minimal required assignments as provided by their teachers.
- If the above requirements are met, the absences will be excused. If not, they will be considered unexcused without a note from a physician explaining the absence.

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EXPANDED FOR THE FUTURE

SCC Elementary School gears up for first day of classes with new addition

By Tyler Anderson
The Graphic-Advocate Editor

In the 1960s, Rockwell City saw a new elementary school building rise up from the ground. For many years, the building that would become Rockwell City-Lytton Elementary School and later, SCC Elementary School, housed kindergarteners through fifth graders.

Nearly 60 years later, the building is the primary learning place for preschoolers to third graders.

The building contained, and still contains, an office area with three wings of classrooms, a library in the heart of the building and a multipurpose room on its southern end. The large area was home to the school's lunch hours, assemblies, various sessions of physical education and, during inclement weather, a place for indoor recess to take place.

For more than a half century, the building remained relatively resolute, even in the face of name changes, movement of students and staff and the merger between the former Rockwell City-Lytton Community School District with its neighbor to the south in Southern Cal.

As the years marched on, educational needs have shifted and prompted the South Central Calhoun Elementary School to make do with what space they had. Soon, open space had become scarce within the



SCC Elementary Secretary Leslie Stamp (center, right) and SCC Tech Director Julia Jacobs (center) prepare the administrative area for the beginning of the new school year, set for August 24. [Tyler Anderson/The Graphic-Advocate]

building.

For example, a room that was once a custodial closet was converted into an office for the guidance counselor. With the lack of space and funds starting to be freed up for a

major project, the SCC Community School District decided that it was high time to give its elementary building a much-needed expansion.

To SCC Elementary School Principal Nicole McChesney, the project came about through coordination within the district.

“Our superintendent at the time, Jeff Kruse, and the school board were very intentional about planning for the maintenance and improvement of district facilities,” said McChesney. “Knowing that we would soon pay off the debt from the fine arts addition at the high school, we were in a financial position to start thinking about what the next few years of maintenance and improvements should be.”

“We took a look at all our buildings and outdoor facilities and compiled a list of their needs and limitations,” McChesney

continued. “There were several opportunities for the staff and community to have input. It became clear that the need for more space at the elementary was a priority, as was the renovation of the locker rooms at the high school.”

While it took several years of planning, formulating and plenty of special meetings, the South Central Calhoun Board of Directors passed a \$4.8 million measure to expand the building on March 11, 2019. A special committee was created to cut down on the initial price tag, and residents within the district voted in favor of the project.

This paved the way for the elementary's new endeavor.

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“We then worked with an architectural firm and school finance consultants to develop these projects at a level that would fit our projected budget,” McChesney said. “Once we had a solid idea of the need and proposed scope of the work, we were very fortunate to have the support and approval of the taxpayers. The addition and remodeling could not have happened without that.”

During the summer of 2019, construction crews got to work on the project, with a completion date of August 2020. The project would entail a new administration area, remodeled classrooms, a wing designated for preschoolers and a gymnasium that can hold up to 250 spectators.

By November, the building was enclosed and interior work began.

Despite no major setbacks, the COVID-19 situation did cancel classes for the rest of the 2019-2020 academic year this past March. Fortunately, there was a silver lining, as crews were able to partake in asbestos abatement with no students or staff on the premises.

“As with any project, there were unexpected issues and expenses that came up, but there were no major hiccups,” McChesney said of the construction progress made. “In fact, with the school closure in March, the contractors were able to start

asbestos removal and the remodeling work in the existing areas a couple of months sooner than anticipated. We were very fortunate that there was no shut down of work or delay in shipping materials related to COVID-19.”

This leads to the here and now, where the long awaited addition is in its final phases before completion. On August 5, teachers situated in the addition were allowed to move in their supplies and materials.

According to McChesney, the building is now suited to the needs of today’s students.

“This added and remodeled space will better meet the academic, social-emotional and health needs of our students,” McChesney said. “It will also give the staff what they need to do their jobs.”

The elementary will be able to house a “Reset Room,” office space for mental counseling and dedicated spaces for students with disabilities and the school’s talented and gifted program. This also allowed SCC Elementary to acquire more staff.

“We were able to provide enough space to hire an additional special education teacher to serve students,” McChesney said. “Our Instructional Coach was able to move into her own office after making do with a corner of the library or a shared space with me.



Pictured is an exterior shot of the new addition at SCC Elementary. The expansion includes a new parking lot and entryway for preschoolers. [Tyler Anderson/The Graphic-Advocate]

Now, she’ll be able to meet and work with teachers in a more productive atmosphere.”

The library’s workroom is now freed up, and spaces for one-to-one learning is available. The building was also able to bring several aspects up to code to provide a safe and accessible environment.

Of course, there’s the gym – complete with a Daktronics scoreboard, a hardwood

surface and the motto of “every child, every day” emblazoned on its western wall. McChesney noted a few more improvements.

“Our P.E. teacher’s classroom will no longer be in the cafeteria, so he won’t have to cut class short to help put out lunch tables,” McChesney said. “He’ll be able to teach all day, put up a volleyball net and even explore new possibilities such as gymnastics. Our music teacher will be able to have concerts without setting out folding chairs or using the middle school facilities.”

“Students will have a place to run and play for indoor recess instead of sitting or walking in the halls,” added McChesney. “We will have an adequate space for assemblies and other special events. The gym will also serve more than just the elementary students. The competition-sized floor will allow community, junior high and high school sports to use the facility as well.”

The most important portion of the addition is the preschool wing, complete with two large rooms and a third room used for art and guidance.

“The preschool rooms will now have their own entrance, making it easier and safe for student pick-up and drop-off at the middle of the day,” McChesney said of the wing. “There will no longer be a need to limit preschool enrollment or to bus our youngest students from one side of the district to the other.”



Here is an interior shot of the new gymnasium at SCC Elementary. The floor will soon be painted and ready for physical education classes, music concerts and athletic events. [Tyler Anderson/The Graphic-Advocate]

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The South Central Calhoun Elementary School, located on the east side of Rockwell City, is scheduled to be ready for the first day of classes, scheduled for August 24. In front of the building is Brower Street, which is under construction. [Tyler Anderson/The Graphic-Advocate]

Last, but certainly not least, is the entrance and administration area. Visitors will now enter a reception area before officially entering the building itself. For staff, they will have a fob for entry.

“Despite the security measures, the entrance will be much more welcoming and accommodating to guests,” McChesney said. “As opposed to the former reception area, there will now be space for visitors to wait, as well as allow traffic to flow in and out. The guidance counselor will finally have an office, and there will be a conference room for meetings with parents or collaborative work among teachers.”

“The nurse’s room has been upgraded from a tiny area with one cot to a spacious, more healthy space with two beds, a shower and laundry facilities,” McChesney continued. “The food pantry will be located in a more private space, and there will be storage for paper and other supplies that were previously cluttering the hallways.”

The staff will now possess a break room, where they can eat and take a short rest before getting back to the grind of the school day.

With the new expansion set to be complete by August 24, students and staff should take in the enhanced learning environment for years to come.

“As the needs of our students become increasingly diverse and the expectations placed on schools encompass more social services, we need not only the resources

but also the space to meet those needs,” McChesney said. “We have always had incredibly dedicated and highly effective staff.”

For Kruse – one of the movers and shakers behind the project as the former SCC Superintendent and currently the top educator at East Sac County and Ar-We-Va, the project’s completion is bittersweet.

“I’ve jokingly said that I feel a bit like Moses, in the fact I was able to see the promised land, but will not have the opportunity to enter it,” Kruse said. “The new addition at SCC Elementary was a much needed improvement that will allow the district to better serve the educational, social, emotional and physical needs of students. I want to extend another thank you to the public for their support to approve the VPEL (Voted Physical Plant and Equipment Levy) and to allow the district the ability to improve district facilities for the long term future.”

The new SCC Superintendent, Brad Anderson, was thrilled for the project and echoed his colleague’s words.

“We are extremely excited about our new elementary space and cannot thank our local taxpayers enough for supporting this endeavor,” Anderson said. “We cannot say enough about the support that has been given for the project and we are eager to show it off once the COVID-19 restrictions subside.”

McChesney, who will get to have a window in her office for the first time in her 18 years as principal, now believes that SCC



Even though its walls are still bare, the preschool wing (pictured) is nearly complete. The wing will comprise of two large rooms for “the littles” and an art/guidance room for TK through third grade. [Tyler Anderson/The Graphic-Advocate]

Elementary can provide an excellent building to complement its outstanding staff.

“We have consistently delivered a ‘Blue Ribbon’ educational program and achieved high outcomes,” McChesney said. “Now, we have the excellent facilities to match.

Our vision statement is that ‘SCC Elementary will be a place where we meet the educational, emotional and physical needs of every child, every day.’ This building project is an important tool for achieving that vision for the 2020-2021 year and beyond.”

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