

# Community support helps District 7 thrive

Segue • SIUE

Friday, May 5, 2017



On this Sunday's episode of Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's premier radio show on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound, SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke, PhD, sits down with Edwardsville School District 7 Superintendent Lynda Andre, EdD. They chat about how, despite ongoing budgetary concerns, the district and surrounding communities have been able to work together to ensure the best possible education for their children.

After receiving her undergraduate degree from Western Illinois University, Andre's personal education journey brought her to SIUE, where she earned both a master's and doctorate in education.

Andre served as an elementary school teacher at Nelson Elementary School from 1991 until 1996, when she moved to central office administration. She became the District 7 coordinator of federal and state grants, overseeing Title 1, early childhood block, and other grant programs. In 1999, she was named assistant superintendent for curriculum. Following the retirement of Dr. Ed Hightower in 2015, Andre was named District 7 superintendent.

"Edwardsville District 7 has a long history of pride in having academically excellent institutions for students to attend," Andre says. "We take a lot of pride in that. Throughout all grade levels within our district, our students excel."

The district itself has 15 campuses consisting of six primary schools, four intermediate schools, two middle schools, a main campus high school, an alternative high school, as well as a satellite campus at Lewis and Clark Community College's N.O. Nelson Complex. Students from over 185 square miles of unincorporated Madison County, all the way past Worden, Prairietown, Dorsey, and within Edwardsville and Glen Carbon, have the opportunity to attend schools within the district.

"Does it create challenges when your district's footprint is so large?" Pembroke inquires.

"It absolutely does," she replies, "We run our transportation system through the entire district, eight times per day. It is a large and expensive operation. On top of that, we currently have 945 employees who serve our students, including certified staff, administrators, teachers, food service workers, educational assistants, monitors, custodians, maintenance, security staff and students who work in our before- and after-school programs."

Providing a plethora of opportunities for its students, both academic and extracurricular, has been something the district has prided itself on. Unfortunately, the current state budget crisis has resulted in a lack of funding for programs within the school district.

After doing all it could to prevent the elimination of certain programs and services, the district looked to the people within its community for support. A budget referendum was introduced on the local ballot in April's election that increased the maximum tax rate for educational purposes for District 7 from 2.15 percent to 2.7 percent.

“A large part of our information campaign was about the school’s financial picture related to state funding,” Andre says, “Looking at the pride the community had in our district, being something that they wanted to continue for both the children today and the district’s future children, we were thrilled that people said yes.”

The referendum, aptly named “Proposition E,” passed with 8,610 of more than 14,000 votes.

“We are incredibly happy for you,” Pembroke says, “I believe the strength of our community begins with the school district. By having such a strong district, it allows so many other things to work well.”

Despite the state’s strict requirements and licensure standards for current and new teachers, it is no surprise that the school district has no shortage of applicants for their highly sought after positions.

“We have excellent working conditions and facilities, and a strong community backing of education,” Andre says. “Even during these financial times, we attract many qualified candidates, and we are able to select the very best people for the job.”

To hear Pembroke and Andre’s conversation in its entirety, listen in at 9 a.m. on Sunday to Segue on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

*SIUE Marketing & Communications*