

A History of College Community Schools 1953 – 2011

The Iowa State Legislature started a series of laws beginning in 1947 to have the Iowa educational system reorganized. At this point in time, there were individual Township school districts in existence. In the geographical area that later became the College Community School District there were three townships involved in the discussion leading to reorganization: Fairfax, College and Putnam Townships.

- The Fairfax School housed Primary through 10th grade with students then paying tuition to go into Cedar Rapids for high school.
- College Township School had consolidated the one-room schools (Union, Lone Willow, Rose Hill, Center, Schaefer Heights, Prairie Ridge, Buresh, Belle Prairie and Konigsmark) into one building to be built south of Cedar Rapids (later to become Prairie Elementary and then Prairie Heights Elementary)
- Putnam Township schools consisted of several one-room schools (including Honey Grove, Center #3, Big Grove).

In the early 1950's, the Cedar Rapids School District sent a notification to the school board of the three townships and indicated that they would no longer accept tuition students from its neighboring school districts for high school. They would be willing, however, to merge those township schools into the Cedar Rapids School District. An election was held in the spring of 1953 to create a new school district instead of merging into the Cedar Rapids District.

The first elected school board members were Kenneth E. Stahle, Leo A. Modracek, Louis P. Dolezal, Milton Chadima and Glenn E. Selzer. The College Community School Board hired Sam Wiley, previously the Superintendent of the College Township Schools, to serve as the Superintendent of the newly formed district. Linn County Superintendent of Schools, Walter A Shupp, was instrumental in leading the formation of the College Community School District.

College Community District highlights include:

1954

- All of the country schools were closed and the students were educated in the Fairfax School, Ely School and College Township Elementary (currently Prairie Heights Elementary).
- Two new 60-passenger busses were purchased to transport students to their respective schools.
- The School Board along with the advice of several citizen committees, decided to purchase 40 acres of farmland and build a high school across the road from the current College Township Elementary and a few hundred yards west. This remains the site of the current Prairie High School.

1955

- In February, 1955, the School Board announced a contest to select the name for the new high school building. The School Board chose the name "Prairie High School" based on an essay written by an eighth grade student, Kathleen Booth.

1956

- At the start of the second semester of the 1956-57 school year, the high school was opened for 8th, 9th and 10th grade students.

1957

- Bond issue passed and a gymnasium was added to the high school
- Football and basketball programs were started at PHS.
- On January 15, 1958, the first basketball game was held in the new PHS gymnasium.
- Lighting was added to the football field in the fall.

1958

- 7th through 12th grade students from the Swisher Independent School District attended the College Community Schools for the first time on a tuition basis.
- A bond issue was passed for additions to be made to College Elementary
- On October 17th, elementary students spelled out “HELLO IKE” to greet the president
- 11th and 12th grade students joined Prairie High School.

1959

- On May 28, 1959 the first Commencement Exercises for Prairie High School was held with 61 students graduating.
- Driver’s Education class was started with the purchase of a 1957 Chevrolet.
- Bond issues were passed to build a junior high school and additions to the high school.

1960

- Students from the Swisher Independent and Jefferson Township schools joined College Community based on the outcome of an election in July 1960.
- A wrestling program as started at Prairie High School with 24 wrestlers participating.
- A bond issued passed to finish the Junior High School and build a Bus Garage.

1961

- A bond issue was passed in the spring of 1961 and 25 acres of land east of the high school was purchased for the construction of a new elementary which opened as Prairie Intermediate.
- Prairie Junior High School opened in the fall of 1961.
- Minerivan Chapter of National Honor Society was established at Prairie High School with the first induction of students being held on April 19.

1962

- Junior High Schools attended the first Outdoor Education Program at Camp Wapsie in 1962. This program continues in 2011, however, students now attend Outdoor Education week at Camp lo-dis-e-ca south of the district.
- Prairie Intermediate opened in the fall of 1962.

1966

- Students from Walford started attending College Community Schools in the fall of 1966.

1967

- September 15, 1967, the football field was dedicated and officially named the “John W. Wall Field” in recognition of Prairie High School graduate, John Wall, who was killed in action during the Vietnam War.
- The first Prairie High School marching band was formed with 67 members
- James Bayne became the second superintendent of College Community Schools in August 1967.

1969

- April 1969, girl’s golf, tennis and gymnastics programs were added to the high schools programs.
- A bond issue passed on November 18th to building a new elementary – Prairie View.

1970

- A new Transportation and Building and Grounds facility was constructed.
- A girls swimming team was established at the high school using the YMCA pool in Cedar Rapids.

1971

- 76th Street Coalition Show Choir was started. (Now known as the Prairie Ambassadors)

1972

- During the spring of 1972, the school board authorized the addition of a high school girls basketball program and the initiation of an auto mechanics program.
- Prairie View Elementary opened.
- A bus loading area was built.
- Schools at Walford, Ely, Shueyville and Ely were closed.

1973

- In October 1973, the school board and Kirkwood Community College school board reached an agreement in which approved PHS students could attend certain KCC classes. The College Community School district would pay the tuition for these students.
- The Loren Slycord Memorial Smoking Lounge for students was established in the outdoor courtyard between two wings of the high school.

1974

- On March 4, 1974, there was a significant fire in the high school building with damage exceeding \$100,000. Arson was suspected and later investigation established that a night watchman, provided by the security company that the school district had engaged for protection, had set the fire. The largest amount of the damage was from smoke, which enveloped the whole building. Classes were suspended for one week for clean up.
- During the summer of 1974, a closed-circuit television system was installed in cooperation with KCC. The base for this operation was that college programs could be requested at any time. The teachers at CCS designed and selected these instructional programs and assigned them to the audiovisual library at KCC where they could be played upon demand.

1975

- In August 1977, the CCS District gave the old College Township Hall to Usher's Ferry. That building as well as the old Fairfax Township Cherry Valley country school building exist at Ushers Ferry today.
- Elementary grades were reconfigured placing K-3rd grade students at Prairie Elementary (Heights), K-3 at Prairie View and Prairie Intermediate would house 4th-6th grades.

1976

- Longtime teacher and coach, Roger Freeman, died after an injury sustained in a horseback riding accident following the homecoming parade on September 19.
- Mini Courses were started on the last three days of school.

1978

- Dr. William Bach takes over as new district superintendent.

1979

- Prairie High School won the State Wrestling Tournament.

1980

- September 1980 a new press box was constructed at John W Wall Field

1981

- February 1981, the College Community Schools Foundation was established. It was the first foundation established in Iowa to support a public school district. The name was later changed to "Prairie School Foundation".
- PHS Football team won the state championship.

1983

- Kindergarten went from a ½ day program to a full day program.

1984

- January 3, 1984, The Five C's (College Community Child Care Center) opened. The name was later changed to The Early Childhood Center.
- During the 1984-85 school year, a monthly newsletter, Prairie Pride, was published and distributed to all patrons of the district.

1988

- Prairie Elementary (now Prairie Heights) wooden playground was built in four days by volunteers, students and parents. This playground was worn out and replaced in the summer of 2011.

1989

- Prairie Junior High becomes Prairie Middle School and freshman join the high school.
- A bond issued was passed to remodel the high school science labs, library, cafeteria and industrial technology.
- Robert Bostwick becomes the district superintendent

1990

- A bond issue was passed to remodel the high school and build a new gymnasium and auditorium.

1992

- Mick Starcevich becomes the district's Superintendent.

1993

- Grade levels were reconfigured making Prairie Elementary, Prairie View and Prairie Intermediate grades Kindergarten through 5th grades.
- Prairie Elementary was renamed Prairie Heights Elementary.
- Prairie Intermediate was renamed Prairie Crest Elementary.

1994

- A bond issue was passed to remodel Prairie Crest Elementary and Prairie Middle School

1995

- Prairie High School takes top honors at the state wrestling tournament.

1996

- Prairie Oaks, is added at Four Oaks campus on Kirkwood Blvd. The name was later changed to Prairie Edge.

1997

- A bond issue passed for additions and renovations to Prairie Crest Elementary and Prairie Middle School.

1998

- The School Board adopts the basic academic skill certificate requirement that will require all students to reach a basic level of proficiency prior to graduation
- PHS Boys Basketball won the state championship.

1999

- A bond issue was passed to remodel and add additions to the high school to include room for study halls, a new guidance area, a Success Center and more classroom space.

2001

- A bond issue was passed on March 13 to build a new elementary (Prairie Ridge) and for additions to be made at Prairie Heights and Prairie View elementary buildings.

2003

- Prairie Ridge Elementary opens for Kindergarten through 5th grade.
- Dick Whitehead is the new Superintendent of the district

2006

- Mini Courses in the high school were discontinued

2009

- College Community receives the federal preschool grant allowing half-day preschool to be offered free of charge for four-year old students.
- Staggered school start times were initiated to accommodate transportation needs with Prairie Creek Intermediate and Prairie Point Middle School & 9th Grade Academy starting classes at 8:00 am and Prairie Crest, Heights, Ridge and View Elementary buildings and Prairie High School starting classes at 9:00 am.
- District-wide grade reorganization took place with Crest, Heights, Ridge and View Elementary buildings educating Preschool through 4th grade students; 5th and 6th grade students attended Prairie Creek Intermediate; 7th through 9th grade students were housed at Prairie Point Middle School and Ninth Grade Academy and the High School educating students in 10th through 12th grades.

2011

- John Wall Memorial Stadium receives a new entrance, more bleachers and artificial turf. A rededication ceremony was held in August 2011.
- Prairie Pride paper newsletter is replaced by ENews, a weekly emailed newsletter.
- Campus now includes 381 Acres
- 84% of 7-12 grade students are involved in extracurricular activities
- ELL (English Language Learners) Students Served: 92 (16 different languages)
- Special Education Students served: 582
- 81 Bus Routes with average daily ridership (morning & afternoon): 6,000 students
- High School students are currently enrolled in 259 college credit courses
- Total meals served per year: 734,659

Thanks to the following for their contribution to the compiling of data for the history of College Community Schools:

Glenn Selzer, Founding School Board Member 1954-1955; District Secretary and Business Manager 1955-1984

Sam Wiley, CCS Superintendent 1953-1967

Sharon Ham, University of Iowa Case Study in School District Reorganization: The College Community School District, May 1981

College Community Schools Superintendents

1954-1967	Sam Wiley
1967-1978	James Bayne
1978-1989	William Bach
1989-1992	Robert Bostwick
1992-2003	Mick Starcevich
2003-Present	Dick Whitehead

Enrollment

1954 – 125 (K-10 th)	1995 – 3136 (K-12 th)
1971 – 2855 (K-12 th)	2000 – 3473 (K-12 th)
1975 – 3023 (K-12 th)	2005 – 3977 (K-12 th)
1980 – 2776 (K-12 th)	2010 – 4927 (Preschool-12 th)
1985 – 2439 (K-12 th)	2011- 5055 (Preschool-12 th)
1990 – 2433 (K-12 th)	

Prairie High School Graduating Classes

1959- 61 Graduates

1969 – 130 Graduates

1979 – 178 Graduates

1989 – 197 Graduates

1999 – 188 Graduates

2009 – 242 Graduates