

Sycamore School District and Board Reverse Deficit Spending and Obtain a Balanced Budget Using Forecasting Model

THE SITUATION

Located in the rural western suburbs of Illinois, Sycamore Community School District 427 serves over 3,500 students and maintains a comprehensive educational program run by a highly qualified and balanced staff. Nicole Stuckert, CFO/CSBO at Sycamore, and Jim Dombek, District 427 Board President, discovered the district was in a situation in which state funding was declining and cash reserves were dwindling. The district was heading towards a deep deficit and needed to take corrective measures immediately to avoid a loss of funds in five years. Stuckert and Dombek were looking for a tool that could allow them to accurately project their financial position over the upcoming five years in a manner that was understandable to stakeholders.

THE SOLUTION

In 2013, PMA Financial Network introduced Stuckert to Forecast5 Analytics, as they knew the budgeting and forecasting tool 5Cast™ would help solve the issues they were facing. Very quickly, the team at Forecast5 partnered with Sycamore and the Board to build an interactive model that allowed the district to automatically generate reports, develop multi-year budgets, and visually communicate their financial position to stakeholders.

“WE LIKED THE INSTANTANEOUS ABILITY TO DEMONSTRATE THE EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE BOTTOM LINE WITH AN EASILY UNDERSTANDABLE GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION.”

— Jim Dombek, District 427 Board President

THE RESULTS

Having the ability to use real numbers directly from the budget and expense ledgers allowed the district and Board to visually understand and foresee their situation in the coming years. It was invaluable to have the ability to enter real time figures and see instantaneously what the impact of the proposal would be on the district's future economic health. The Board was now able to discuss and formulate a three-year deficit reduction plan designed to bring about a balanced budget and reverse the negative trend graphically displayed.

Over the ensuing three-year period, Stuckert and the Board used 5Cast™ to help see where they were financially at any given point, if additional course corrections were needed, and analyze how their decisions were impacting progress. The end result was a balanced budget and steps toward deficit reversal.

Since signing on, the administrative team at Sycamore has enjoyed working with Forecast5 and appreciates their partnership with the National School Boards Association (NSBA). Forecast5 provides ongoing assistance and training to help members with understanding reports, answering questions, and addressing concerns. For those considering Forecast5 Analytics, Dombek says “If you are not using this product now, why not? It is an essential tool for financial planning that every district needs to have in its toolbox.”



Organization Type:
K-12 School District

Enrollment: 3,763

Annual Operating
Budget: \$50M

Sycamore Community School District 427 was formed in 1950 and encompasses over 80 square miles. The district consists of five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Sycamore has a comprehensive educational program and is a member of the Kishwaukee Education Consortium. Sycamore publicizes that they “empower all learners to succeed in their world”.