

History of Sargent Consolidated Schools as recorded in the:

***Handbook of Administration***  
***Sargent Consolidated School District Number Three***

*The San Luis Valley, lying in the central southern part of the State of Colorado, is a level plain approximately 150 miles by 70 miles completely surrounded by high mountain ranges and including in its boundaries a large variety of industrial, livestock, ranching and farming interests. Roughly in the center of this valley Rio Grande County is located. The chief interests of this district are farming and the industries dependent upon farmers and their produce.*

*Originally the farming district of the county was served by typical one room rural schools which were found to be inadequate to meet the educational and social needs of the communities. As a result of the recognition of this need, a program of consolidation for the purpose of securing modern school service was embarked upon which resulted in the establishment of four comparatively large schools, vis: The Monte Vista Consolidated Schools, The Center Joint Consolidated Schools, The Del Norte Consolidated Schools and The Sargent Consolidated Schools.*

*These schools represent an investment in buildings and equipment of approximately \$1,000,000.00 and together they afford every child in the county an equal opportunity for high class, modern education.*

*The Sargent Consolidated School serves the territory lying between the City of Monte Vista and the City of Center, being 7 miles north and 2 miles east of Monte Vista and 5 miles directly south of Center. The district consists of approximately 100 square miles of land and was the first area in the county to be consolidated.*

*In 1916 the area now included in the Sargent Consolidated School District was served by nine small rural schools. Pupils came to them on ponies or on foot for distances up to four or five miles and attendance in the winter was irregular. The only high school was Monte Vista, and the distance and transportation difficulty limited the number of pupils who attended high school to less than ten percent of the eighth grade graduates.*

*In the summer of 1916 the services of C. G. Sargent, state director of rural education, and George A. Young, a school superintendent with considerable experience in the consolidation movement, were secured to assist in the preliminary organization. Many meetings to discuss the situation were held and on July 31, 1916, the first Consolidation was perfected.*

*The district at this time included about 60 square miles of rich farming land, and on March 1, 1917, a bond issue of \$37,000 was voted for the construction of a building.*

*The first building was ready for occupancy in November, 1917. School was opened with six teachers and about 100 pupils. A fleet of 5 buses furnished the necessary transportation.*

*The school was located in the open country nine miles north of Monte Vista, and it was soon found that living accommodations for teachers, and garage room for the buses must be provided. As a result a modern teacherage for the women teachers and a nine room modern dwelling for the use of the superintendent was constructed during the winter of 1917-18.*

*Along with this construction program was included an eight room residence to be used by the pastor of the community which used the school building for its services. This work was of course financed by the church as an independent project.*

*The success of the adventure soon created the demand for the enlargement of the district, so on July 19, 1918, a third consolidation was made and on December 1, 1918 a bond issue of \$25,000 was voted to cover the deficit created by the addition to the school plant. However, the buildings proved entirely inadequate to care for the added pupils and on January 1, 1921, a third bond issue of \$123,000 was made to construct a high school building and double house for the janitor and mechanic.*

*The new building was occupied in the fall of 1921 and provided modern class room, library and laboratory facilities. An auditorium with a seating capacity of 700 was included for the use of the school, the church and the numerous community gatherings.*

*In 1924 an additional dwelling house was built for further accommodation of married employees and their families.*

*In 1937 another bond issue of \$25,000 was voted by the taxpayers of the district for the construction of a gymnasium.*

*The school plant now consists of the eight buildings located on a 12 acre tract. Ten large auto buses furnish transportation for the pupils, numbering approximately 350, eighteen teachers, five men and thirteen women, comprise the faculty and are housed on or near the school grounds. The school is organized into a grade school consisting of the 6 lower grades and a Spanish primary under the direction of a principal, and a 6 year high school also under the supervision of a principal.*

Prior to the construction of the high school gymnasium in 1937, the gym was on the second floor above the bus garage, located behind the elementary building. As the district continued to thrive and grow, in 1951 an addition was made on the east side of the elementary building adding a dining room on the ground level and 4 classrooms on the second level. In 1965 a new addition to the high school building provided an east wing to the building adding a science lab and additional classrooms. In addition bleachers and locker rooms were added to the gym with a hallway to connect the high school building to the gymnasium.

In February, 1959 the Stanley School and the Sargent Consolidated School District Number 3 combined and reorganized the board to become Sargent School District RE-33J.

In 1973 a metal building was constructed to provide a new bus garage and auxiliary gym. High school additions continued in 1981 with the renovation of the former patio area to provide a music room, a wrestling and multi-purpose room was added to the west side of the building, along with a remodel of the wrestling shower room and boys restrooms in the gym hallway. A ramp to the auditorium was also added to the west side of the building. This building project contract was for \$247,067. The District invested dollars available from the Capital Reserve Fund and the 1981 budget at 16 ½ %, and borrowed \$160,000 at 8½% interest. In addition, the district purchased a 12-foot wide mobile home for use as a kindergarten classroom.

In 1990 the elementary building was completely remodeled with \$1,750,000 in general obligation building bonds, which matured in 2010. The driveway in front of the building was added and a new cafeteria and band/music room was added. The wall between the cafeteria and music room was moveable, to provide a large multipurpose room. At the secondary building the music room was converted into a space for the library and the east staircase was remodeled and an elevator added along with restrooms on the second floor. Between 2000 and 2004 several Capital Construction Grants provided funds for additional improvements for the high school building. The auditorium was also renovated and community members provided funds through the "Adopt a Chair" program. For a donation of \$125 donors names were engraved on a plaque and placed on a newly refurbished chair.

In the spring of 1996 a group of concerned parents organized a project to improve the elementary playground. A bike-a-thon raised funds, donations were collected and additional funds were provided by the district. Volunteers donated many hours to remove old equipment, prepare the surface and install new equipment.

In 2003 the former house in use as the administration building was moved off the school campus and put to use with the Challenge Colorado therapeutic horse riding program. This provided additional space for construction of a new preschool building, primarily funded with a grant from the Department of Local Affairs. Also in 2003 additional property was purchased 1 mile north of the school with district funds and development of the baseball field began with the donation of funds from community members. During 2003-04 a new transportation facility was constructed with funds from a ballot question for \$400,000 debt. A loan was secured for \$370,000. The building was completed in August, 2004, several thousand dollars below the anticipated amount. The new facility minimized traffic safety concerns and provided space for indoor parking of busses. The former bus garage was renovated to accommodate a wood shop classroom and the former "superintendent house" was renovated for use initially as a preschool building and later became the new home for the administration offices.

Approval of a BEST (Building Excellent Schools Today) Grant in spring, 2009 provided for a \$17 million construction project. Ground breaking for construction of a new high

school building took place in September of 2009. Renovation of the elementary building and high school gymnasium were also included in the project. A Grand Opening and open house for the new building took place on August 12, 2010. The new building provided a new kitchen and cafeteria, gymnasium and auditorium. The construction of the new building was reminiscent of the old one, and included murals of historic photographs taken through the years. The seating in the new auditorium includes the original seats from the auditorium in the old building. The renovation of the elementary building converted the former kitchen and cafeteria space to classrooms and a nurse's office. In addition a new roof, HVAC system, elevator and fire sprinkler system were installed along with an update of the water supply system. Demolition of the old high school building was completed in the late summer/fall of 2010. The final phase of BEST Grant project was the renovation of the old high school gymnasium. The project included the installation of a fire alarm system, handicapped accessible bathrooms, a new roof and gym floor and an update of the heating system. Sprinkler systems were also installed on the football field and grounds.

Sargent School District RE-33J continues to thrive and the goal of Mr. Sargent and the founding community members for the school district *to "afford every child in the county an equal opportunity for high class, modern education"* continues to be as relevant now as it was then. The district's current enrollment is diverse, with over 65% of students being from out-of-district. Students excel in academics through test scores, academic awards associated with Science and History Fair, Pan American Days, FBLA, FFA to name a few. Sargent graduates receive a high number of scholarship awards and become successful in their post-secondary education pursuits as well. The 2017-18 School Year will mark the District's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. An All-School Reunion held July, 2017 began the celebrations.

