

Dear Iroquois West CUSD 10 Community,

WE WANT YOUR VOICE! WE WANT EVERYONE'S VOICE!

The Iroquois West Board of Education is seeking community engagement. As I stated, in a letter last Spring, providing quality education to meet the needs of a 21st Century society while being fiscally responsible to all taxpayers is the main goal of the Iroquois West CUSD #10 Board of Education. That goal becomes increasingly difficult when faced with the fiscal uncertainties from Springfield and the monetary drain of aging buildings.

With that in mind, the IWEST Board has decided to be proactive by asking the question, "What do we need to do now to ensure the District provides a quality and competitive education and be respectful of taxpayers now and in the future? How long can we kick the can down the road before we lose control of the can?"

The Board has decided to look at a long term strategic plan to ensure educational efficiency. The Board has implemented a computer program QLEO (Quality Learning Environment Objectives) to research the educational efficiency, educational adequacy, and real 21st Century learning environments of the District's education and buildings. The program looks at 93 variables from all stakeholders' perspectives, while taking the subjectivity and emotion out of the equation to determine what is best for students, taxpayers, and the community.

In March, Board representatives met with a focus group of parents, teachers, and community members to review the ratings and to provide scenarios for the District to consider. The focus group developed 7 scenarios. The representatives of QLEO then performed a cost/benefit analysis of those scenarios. In September, the Citizen Leadership Committee analyzed the scenarios and decided on which scenarios to bring to the community for input during the school year.

The IWEST Board is now seeking community engagement. A community engagement planning process is built from the ground up, incorporating the input from all community members and develops consensus as to the strongest approach to ensuring a quality educational experience for the future. Community engagement is an open process that succeeds because everyone has a voice, everyone is heard, and the best ideas quickly rise to the top.

As a result of the community leadership committee input sessions, the Board will develop a long term plan for the future to address the needs of students and the deterioration of the buildings, while being respectful of taxpayers. A long term strategic plan that is developed as a result of this process will stand up to the rigorous scrutiny to which the public is entitled.

The Citizen Leadership Committee and the IWEST Board of Education will be inviting the community to provide input on several scenarios, with their the cost/benefit analyses, on what is the best solution for every student, parent, taxpayer, and community member of Iroquois West CUSD #10. These meetings are intended to provide information and to seek input.

The goal is to have a well-developed plan for the future that does not put future Boards, future taxpayers, and the educational environment in a knee-jerk decision making process that is detrimental to everyone.

The District and the Citizen Leadership Committee will be transparent in every phase of this strategic planning effort and will openly invite the entire community to provide input as we strive to create a roadmap for a successful future. Now is the time to plan for the future, when we have ample time to responsibly plan for needs. When the time comes, we hope you will join the IWEST planning process. The stronger the planning process, the stronger the outcome.

Below is the list of community meetings. Each meeting will focus on a different aspect of the planning process. The community is strongly encouraged to attend all three meetings.

October 17 - 6pm -8pm at the Middle School in Onarga -- Public Meeting #1 - Discovery:

This meeting has multiple objectives. The first objective will be to introduce the community to the planning process, the dates, events, and activities for which their participation will be requested. The next objective will be to introduce the community to the existing condition of the buildings, both physically and functionally, so that the public can see the issues that must be addressed by the school district, now and in the future. The final objective will be to review preliminary master plan solutions that the Citizen Leadership Committee and school district believe are logical approaches to meet current and future needs. The overall group will then be divided into smaller groups that review the choices established by the School District. After brainstorming and discussing possible solutions, each group will present its solution to the overall group.

December 12 - 6pm – 8pm-- Community Meeting #2 – Building Solutions:

The meeting will start with a recap of the planning process and the work to date, to bring people up to speed who did not attend previous meetings. Architects will then present the recommendations that were suggested at the Discovery meeting by the community and the corresponding costs. Life cycle cost comparisons will be made of all of the proposed solutions (the original solutions presented at the Discovery meeting and the additional suggestions by community members). Once again, the overall group will be divided into smaller groups and asked to narrow the possibilities to the two or three ideas that have the best chance to meet long-term school district and student needs at the lowest cost. After discussing these solutions and selecting the strongest ideas, each group will present its findings to the overall group. The results will be tallied, identifying the community's top two or three conceptual solutions.

February 13 -6 pm – 8pm -- Community Meeting #3 - Options Forum:

Either the architects or representatives of the planning process will describe the work to date to bring people up to speed who may not have attended any or all of the previous meetings. Representatives will describe the two or three options to be considered. At the end of the presentation, attendees at the meeting will vote to select the strongest option. All people present will be given a ballot and asked to cast a vote on the strongest option. At the

conclusion of the voting, the ballots will be counted in public and the community's top option will be identified.

March 13 – 6pm – Citizen Leadership presentation and recommendation to Board

Representatives of the Citizenships Leadership Committee will present the work of the planning process for the IWEST Board of Education's consideration.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I thank the Citizen Leadership Committee for their work thus far. We look forward to working in partnership to ensure a financially sound, safe infrastructure, and effective instructional future for all Iroquois West CUSD #10 students, now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Linda L. Dvorak, Ed.D.