

Community Conversation on Local School Needs Begins

We Have Excellent Schools and We Need To Keep Them That Way

The first round of Facilities Master Plan update meetings took place at 35 school sites over the past month and ushers in the community engagement and information gathering process to better understand local school needs and the community's priorities for them.

An independent community survey of 400 voters in February shows residents feel Chino Valley schools provide a quality education but perceive schools to have a significant need for additional funding. The survey provides insight into community opinions and educational priorities for our schools. More than two-thirds of respondents believe Chino Valley schools provide high-quality education to local students.

"It is significant that our community recognizes that our teachers and students are doing great work in the classroom and our support staff keeps our schools clean, safe and running efficiently," said Superintendent Wayne M. Joseph. "Equally important is that residents view local schools as an integral part of the community with 87% believing that improving public schools helps to maintain strong property values."

The recently conducted Facilities Master Plan update meetings encouraged teachers, staff, and parents to share their ideas on community education priorities and the needs of Chino Valley schools. Leading the discussion was Jim DiCamillo, President, WLC Architects, and Greg Stachura, Assistant Superintendent of Facilities, Planning and Operations.

The discussion centered on the following four categories:

- Renovating existing buildings
- Completing work at schools to enhance or improve existing conditions
- Building something new at a school that currently does not exist
- Incorporating new technology into classrooms and schools

"We met with 200 to 300 people over the course of these meetings and it was clear to us that it is important to our community that we maintain parity of facilities and instruction throughout the District," said Stachura. "Each school had at least one item per category that they feel is needed at their site."

Some of the topics that participants raised were repairing schools that were 25-years-old or more under the state's school modernization program, upgrading classrooms and equipment for career education programs, upgrading technology, adding security features to keep students and staff safe on our campuses, replacing portable buildings with permanent classrooms, and adding equipment that best suits the needs of 21st century classrooms. "Health and safety improvements for our decades-old schools were also common concerns among the participants," Stachura said.

The second round of Facilities Master Plan update meetings with school staff and parents will begin in the fall. Ideas brought forward in the first round will be revisited to provide additional opportunities for input from our school communities.

Further outreach to the community in the first phase of engagement includes an upcoming informational letter to parents and staff and informational presentations to community groups and schools when classes begin later this summer.

During the summer, Superintendent Joseph will meet with business organizations, service clubs, senior citizen organizations, and a wide range of other community groups to exchange ideas on what it takes to keep Chino Valley schools at the forefront of educational excellence.

“We have excellent schools and we want to keep them that way, and so it is important to hear from our teachers, classified staff, administrators, students, residents, parents, business owners, senior citizens, and grandparents as to what they think it takes to maintain our level of excellence,” Superintendent Joseph said.

“The community conversations will continue over the course of the year and will help to inform the Board of Education’s decision regarding a potential educational bond measure in November 2016,” Superintendent Joseph said. “We are focused on listening and gathering information before considering next steps.”

Improving Chino Valley schools is a long-term investment in our community. Local realtors agree that improving neighborhood schools strengthens local property values, and makes our community a more desirable place to live, do business, and raise a family.

Chino Valley’s award-winning local schools significantly outperform the County and State average, and its teachers have been recognized as educators of the year on the County and the State levels. If Chino Valley wants to maintain this high level of academic excellence, it will take a unified approach to safeguard our community and invest in our students by addressing the needs of our aging schools.

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