

SOUTHWEST SCHOOLS: DEFINING THE FUTURE

Monthly Update About Facilities Planning, Community Engagement & More



Feb. 1, 2017

A Fresh Start: District Engages Community In School Facility Planning Process

With a new approach, the Southwest Local School District has launched its 2017 master facility planning process.

A key to the process is gathering more community input than ever before. The district's newly hired architecture firm, SHP Leading Design, is guiding the process. SHP has created a unique planning process used in more than 250 projects nationwide.

The district has created four teams to develop a facilities master plan:

- Core Steering Team, which includes district leaders and provides overall guidance.
- Community Advisory Team, which will help shape the facility master plan;
- Educational Visioning Team, which will focus on what education should look like in our schools;
- Finance Advisory Team, which will scour the district budget to determine the best course of action.

"We knew we had to try something different," Superintendent John C. Hamstra said. "And we knew that, before we go back on the ballot, we have to do a better job of listening to and engaging the community in the planning process."

In January, the school district kicked off the first of a series of town hall meetings, welcoming the entire community. More than 150 people attended, asking questions, sharing their thoughts and volunteering to participate in the months-long process. As February starts, the district continues to be in "listening mode" with all ideas welcome. The process is like a funnel. The wide end of the funnel is where we are now. As we move through each month, the funnel will get narrower with ideas honed and viewed from various angles.

District leaders hope, that by the end of April, they will have a proposed facility master plan that a large majority of the community will support. The plan needs to be educationally appropriate, financially responsible and community supported.



**BURSTING
AT THE SEAMS:**
Danielle Schmidt, an aide
at Crosby Elementary,
instructs students in a
hallway, one of the few
places she has available
because of overcrowding.

Cost to Maintain Southwest Schools With No Upgrades: \$17 million

The district's architecture firm, SHP Leading Design, completed a facilities assessment in late January to determine the cost of "doing nothing" to our school buildings.

The firm's conclusions:

- To keep students "warms, safe and dry" for the next two years would cost nearly \$17 million.
- To upgrade our schools to current educational building standards would cost \$49 million.

"These results are astounding," said Superintendent John C. Hamstra... "The cost of bringing our buildings up to the 2016 / 17 standard is significant. This does not really speak to the next 20-30 years needs."

The district has four major options:

- Continue operating with the current general fund budget, fixing things when they break and adding modular classrooms to address overcrowding;
- Seeking voter approval of a permanent improvement tax levy to fund maintenance priorities;
- Addressing buildings with the greatest needs by renovating or replacing them;

What's Happening in February:

Town Hall meeting #2: Harrison Elementary, Feb. 9, 7 pm

Community Advisory Team meeting #2: Harrison High School, Feb. 23, 7 pm



ELBOW TO ELBOW:

Some Harrison Junior School classrooms, at left, have inadequate space. Teachers struggle to walk between desks to confer with students. Elbow room and desktop space for students is tight.

Did You Know? *Southwest Schools:*

- Added more than 320 students in the last five years. That's more than the entire graduating Class of 2017, which has 260 students.
- Uses hallways, closets, cafeterias and teachers lounges for instruction at Crosby Elementary and Harrison Junior.
- Maintains average class sizes at both schools that significantly exceed the average class size for public schools in Ohio.
- Plans to install six modular classrooms at Harrison Junior and four at Crosby Elementary for the upcoming school year to temporarily deal with the enrollment increase.

About this newsletter

Southwest Schools intends to provide these updates each month about the Educational Facility Master Planning Process and related news. We want to keep our booster and parent support groups informed. We thank all of you for serving our students and schools, and encourage you to stay involved or get involved in the planning process.

— Superintendent John C. Hamstra