

December 12, 2013

Dear community,

Visit almost any one of our school sites and you'll quickly notice one thing: our facilities are worn out.

Heating and air conditioning systems don't work well. Many classrooms are too small or too dark. There isn't enough storage, meeting and collaboration space, or capacity for new technologies. In some places pavement, walls, and/or ceilings are in poor condition, and many of the portables on our sites need to be replaced.

That's just what's visible to the naked eye. Behind the walls, under the floors, tucked up in the ceilings, we also know that our facilities suffer from ills caused by aging infrastructure. For instance, many of the boilers, pumps, and pipes at our schools have reached the end of their useful life. Most of our sites are not energy efficient. And few sites share the same type of lighting, windows, PA systems, or fire alarms, making maintenance costly and inconvenient.

To make matters worse: most of our facilities were built decades ago, which means they are not suited to current "21st century learning" standards.

That's why, starting in February, 2012, the Board of Education began discussing the possibility of putting a bond measure on the ballot in November 2014 – a measure specifically focused on raising money to repair, modernize, and, in some cases, replace our aging facilities.

I am excited to report that our district is now working on a Facilities Master Plan – essentially a blueprint of what our school sites will look like for the next several decades. Our district has already begun working with the architects that the Board of Education approved for this project. In November and December, for instance, teachers and principals met with the architects for this project, Quattrochi Kwok Associates (or QKA), to create "Educational Specifications" for our elementary, middle, and high schools. Those "Ed Specs" set the long-range plan for the district's educational goals, programs, and facilities.

Here's where you can get involved: Beginning in January, 2014, QKA architects will be visiting each school site in the district (including charter schools) to meet with staff, parent/guardians, and community members about their facilities. (You can see a full list of the school site meetings on the [Facilities Master Plan page](#) on our website.)

Beginning in mid-April, the architects and district staff will also hold large community meetings to begin the process of prioritizing just which projects should be covered by a potential bond.

Can't make the meetings? You can stay up to date on what's happening – and make comments – on the individual school site sections on our Facilities Master Plan page. Just click on the school that interests you (in the right-hand column) to find a copy of the 2012 Facilities Assessment Report on that site, as well as minutes from the meeting and a link to make a comment about it. All comments will be posted on that school's page.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of your participation – as parents, guardians, teachers, staff, neighbors, and community members – in this process. Our schools are educational institutions, yes, but they are also deeply embedded in our community life. We need to hear your voices in order to create a plan for our schools that truly reflects our community's values and our community's needs.

Sincerely,

Kirsten M. Vital
Superintendent of Schools