

Superintendent's Corner

by Dr. John P. Ahlgrim, Superintendent of Schools



Get the Facts about the
Referendum Question at
www.d121.org/referendum

A critical aspect of the district's referendum information efforts is to provide clarity and details regarding the impact to students with or without additional funding for the next two years.

There are several programs affected by the referendum question, including the length of our school day (8-period day), academic and mental health assistance, activity programs, and athletic programs. **The information on this page focuses on improving mental health services.**



Community Forum Opportunities

Would you like the District to provide an informational forum for a school or community group to learn about the facts related to the District's revenue challenges and referendum question? Please reach out to Dr. John Ahlgrim at 847-548-7144 or email jahlgrim@wth.net.

Get the Facts About the Referendum Question: Investing in our Students

Improving Mental Health Services

One of the benefits of increased local funding from a successful June 2022 referendum would be increased mental health services. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the previously alarming trends in mental health among youth. WTHS, like all schools, has been working to effectively deal with mental health crises for our students. In fact, we will not be able to effectively address our mission of *maximizing the growth and achievement of every student*, without first also addressing mental health needs. Unmet needs may result in social, emotional, or behavioral challenges. Without effective support services, these students may experience reactive and exclusionary discipline practices (e.g., suspensions or expulsions) that further intensify mental health concerns, interrupt access to and participation in learning, limit opportunities, and negatively affect outcomes.

With additional local funding provided, WTHS will be able to increase mental health services for our youth and help them in their success at WTHS and in life. Increasing mental health services includes leveraging prevention and intervention practices to address the mental health needs of students. It means trying to maximize services at school through the availability of social workers, school counselors, school nurses, and school psychologists. This is not done solely as a response to COVID-19, but as an ongoing priority to fully address children and students' overall wellbeing and their full access to education and opportunities.

Elyssa's Mission

The O'Plaine and Almond social workers recently conducted Elyssa's Mission for our 9th graders at the O'Plaine campus. Elyssa's Mission identifies potential risk factors for suicide in our students. We have conducted this screening each semester at the O'Plaine campus for many years. In October, following a presentation in the auditorium, students were screened over a two-day period during their health classes. Approximately 25% of those students were identified as being at high risk for suicidal ideation. Our social workers have individual meetings with each student who is identified as being high risk.

