

November 22, 2024



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Yorkville community input sought in future of school buildings

Public sessions being held for feedback on district's facilities upgrade plans

By Joey Weslo

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Yorkville School District Superintendent Matt Zediker holds a public listening session at Grande Reserve Elementary School in Yorkville about the future of the district's school buildings. (Provided by the Yorkville School District 115)

November 22, 2024 at 6:00 am CST

Parents of students and community members are being called upon to put on their engineering hats to help school staff brainstorm the future of Yorkville School District facilities. As the student population continues to outpace the available space in current school buildings, the district is launching a Facilities Master Plan upgrade to better equip each building to continue meeting the academic needs of the increasingly diverse student body.

District Superintendent Matt Zediker said he has enjoyed hearing so much feedback during open public sessions at each of the district's schools. Listening sessions have already been held at Autumn Creek Elementary, Bristol Bay Elementary, Grand Reserve Elementary and Yorkville Middle School.

"We are trying to grab as many different groups of people as possible to get their voices in the room," Zediker said. "Every school is unique and we want to make sure we capture both the

opinions of our community and the needs of each individual school. It's important to us that every community member has the opportunity to come listen and share their opinions."

Upcoming public sessions include those at the Early Childhood Center on Dec. 3, and at Yorkville Grade School on Dec. 17. The district also plans on holding a second meeting with community-at-large members on Dec. 11.

Zediker said once common themes and desires emerge from the public feedback, a steering committee, consisting of teachers, principals, district staff, community members, and students, will shape the larger concepts into a formal proposal for the board. He expects the initial concept planning to take place throughout the winter, with a Facilities Master Plan proposed to the board in July, 2025.



"We're hearing some common themes around the need for increased classroom space for our elementary kids and the need to create more space for middle school," Zediker said. "It's also been a resounding theme that our community wants a performing arts center auditorium and an athletics field house for the high school that may benefit the community as well."

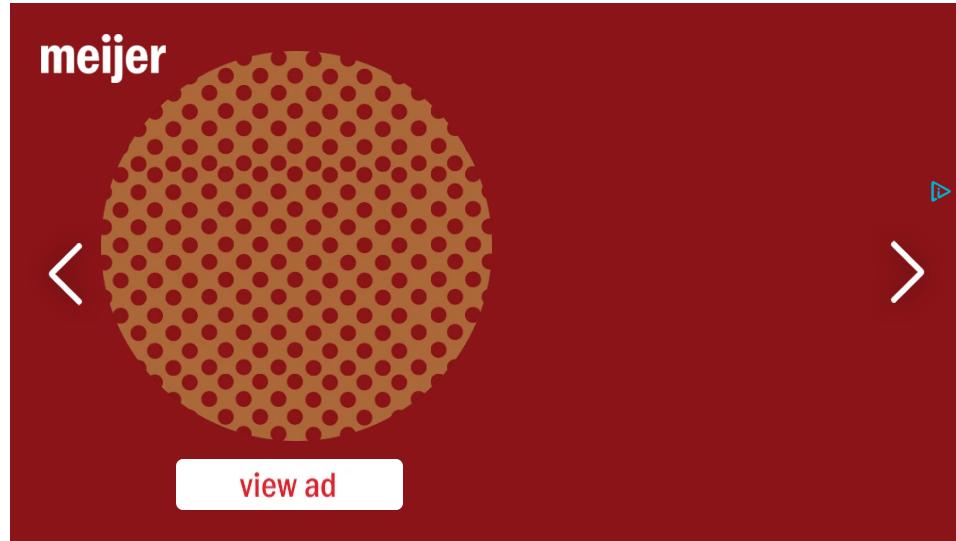


Yorkville School District Superintendent Matt Zediker presents student enrollment data during a public session at Autumn Creek Elementary School in Yorkville. (Provided by The Yorkville School District 115)

Zeideker said the sessions have also been used to share the district's student growth and enrollment data, buildings and spacing data, and the district's demographic trends. He said during past sessions the public also discussed the need for greater parking infrastructure and new tennis courts.

He said the board must balance providing facility upgrades for students and staff while also navigating the budget. The available development opportunities are increased by the district's acquisition of a 100-acre property west of the high school campus. The board approved the purchase back in June for more \$2 million.

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Zediker said the facilities upgrade presents a tremendous opportunity to reshape the schools to better align with some of the district's academic priorities and goals.

"You can't redesign how you're going to teach and learn and not have the proper facilities to execute that plan," Zediker said. "We want to prioritize increasing the number of technical education offerings our students are exposed to. If we want to add manufacturing opportunities for students, we need spaces for them to build and learn about manufacturing. To increase opportunities around nursing and the health field, we need technological upgrades and proper classrooms."

To accommodate the needs of the district's fastest growing student demographic, the district is holding an all-Spanish speaking public listening session.

"We want to make sure we're engaging to see both the strengths of our district and the challenges, whether we need to improve in terms of the offerings in our dual-language grant, our multilingual approach, or expand a physical structure," Zediker said. "We want to make sure their voice is incorporated with creating the best offerings for students who English is their second language. It's important to provide sessions where that community is comfortable coming in to share their ideas and ask questions."

Zediker said the facilities upgrade also provides the opportunity to continue expanding programs for students with special needs. The district is planning a public session for families with special needs children to continue collecting feedback.

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Joey Weslo

Joey Weslo is a reporter for Shaw Local News Network



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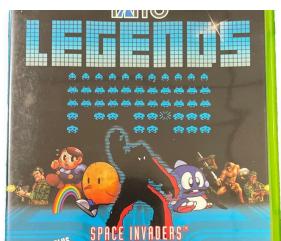
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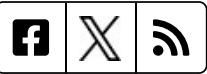


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