



# **Community Engagement Report**

**LEWISTON-ALTURA PUBLIC SCHOOLS ISD #857**

**ENGAGEMENT MEETING #3  
Discovery Discussion Results**

Hosted at Lewiston-Altura High School  
April 3, 2023

**LEWISTON-ALTURA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Monday, April 3, 2023**

**Meeting Date: Monday, April 3, 2023 | 5:30-8:00 p.m.**

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### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT | **EVENT OVERVIEW** Engagement Meeting #3

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Total Participants** | Approx. 111 adults, 5 High School student helpers

**Silent (1945 and earlier)** | 0

**Baby Boomer (1946 – 1964)** | 10

**Gen X (1965 – 1984)** | 45

**Millennial (1984 – 2004)** | 20

**Gen Z (2004 to 2012)** | 4

**Alpha (2013 to Present)** | 0

**Note:** Of the 111 participants, 79 people completed the Sign-in sheet.

#### **SUMMARY, OVERVIEW**

On Monday, April 3, 2023, approximately 111 members of the Lewiston-Altura community came together for an engagement meeting to learn more about ISD 857's plans for a potential November 7, 2023, Operating and Facility Bond Referendum. Participants were provided information on the district's financial and facility challenges through several handouts and a presentation. Superintendent Carman spoke to the district's strategic planning process, major challenges the District is facing around revenue shortages and aging facilities, potential solutions to those challenges, and the next steps the District will be taking.

After the presentation, participants were encouraged to share their feedback in writing via the **Discovery Discussion**, a small-group discussion activity, and a sign in sheet enabling their opinions and questions to be formally recorded. Community members were engaged in the discussion and provided candid feedback when asked to share their group discussions.

## **DATA & ANALYSIS**

### **METHODOLOGY**

We utilized the Discovery small-group discussions to ask questions that were designed to provoke open, honest feedback from participants on the information presented. A total of 111 people participated in the district's third engagement meeting and there were 16 discussion groups or individuals who responded to the discussion questions.

We have included the instructions that were distributed to the community discussion participants below. In these instructions, we encouraged participants to focus on the 3-4 questions most important to their discussion group, and some groups elected to answer all questions as indicated in their notes document.

As a result, questions were ranked, as indicated in the report that follows, based upon those entries receiving the greatest number of responses from the greatest number of participating groups who submitted notes. This raw response rank has been noted under each individual question in the aggregated raw response transcript attached to this report.

### **DISCOVERY DISCUSSION INSTRUCTIONS:**

**Directions:** Form a group of 5-6 people. Try to join a group of people you don't know well.

Identify a scribe and write down the names of the members of your group. Read the questions and have a brief discussion about which questions you think are most important to answer. Answer the questions that you believe are most important to answer starting with the most important to least important.

### **Questions for Discussion (10-15 minutes per question/Choose any 3-4 questions to answer):**

1. Was there an option or anything you heard today that you liked? What would you keep & why?
2. Was there an option or anything you heard today that you didn't like? What would you eliminate & why?
3. Is there any advice or feedback you'd like to give the Lewiston-Altura Public Schools Board in this planning process? What is that feedback?
4. Is there any question/comment that we should have asked but didn't? Please share the question and your answer to it as well!

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### QUESTION ONE

**We asked: *Was there an option or anything you heard today that you liked? What would you keep & why?***

This question received a total of 49 individual responses from 16 of the 16 discussion groups. This makes it the **highest traction item** of this Discovery Discussion based upon volume of participant and group responses.

#### Understanding the Options

Eleven of the 16 groups mentioned they appreciated hearing about the different options, with six of the groups preferring the all-in Option 3. Several mentioned hesitations over the cost of Option 3, however believe it is the best value for the money. “We liked Option 3 because if you keep chipping away at Option 1, there will always be a need for improvements and never get to Option 3.” One group stated, “Appreciate the various options. Need to consider what we like in the options vs. what can pass.” Another group added, “We all would like to see the ‘all-in’ option but are nervous of its feasibility. We feel that updated facilities are crucial in attracting students and staff.”

#### Instructional Spaces

Four groups highlighted how improvements to the instructional spaces, such as Art, Band, Choir, Science and Tech Ed would benefit students and staff. Many believe these improvements would help draw or retain students and staff to the Lewiston-Altura District. One group noted that, “scheduling conflicts would be avoided” with the improvements to and addition of classroom space.

#### Auditorium/Gym Spaces

A new auditorium was high on the list for many of the groups during the discussion of this question. One group commented, “We liked all-in, but too much money. It’s the only option with auditorium. We feel an auditorium is necessary.” Another group wrote, “Auditorium option would be very well used in community, same thing with new game gym.”

#### Security and Safety

Six groups noted that they liked the safety and security improvements mentioned in the options. Three groups cited the improvements to drop-off and pick-up areas as important improvements.

#### Other

All comments related to question one can be found in the Raw Data at the end of the report, however a couple of additional comments are included below.

- “We like that improvements are being discussed – Why did it take so long?”
- “We as a group have young kids and will benefit but for those with grandkids will benefit also.”
- “Great job explaining options.”
- “Area schools have done well with their improvements.”
- “Can the new playground be funded in other ways?”

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### QUESTION TWO

**We asked: *Was there an option or anything you heard today that you didn't like? What would you eliminate and why?***

Thirteen of 16 discussion groups submitted notes addressing this question, generating 19 total responses among them, and making this the **third highest traction question** of this Discovery Discussion. Following are some of the most common themes.

#### **Narrow the Options**

“Option 1 – is that money put into something that will just need upgraded again in only a few years?” and “We think presenting 3 options could be overwhelming. Option 1 feels like a band-aid, bare bones solution to a bigger problem. Present Options 2 & 3 in order for changes to be evident,” were two comments listed recognizing the importance of reducing the number of options presented to the community moving forward or eliminating Option 1 in general. One group of the 13 that responded recommended eliminating Option 3.

#### **Community Support**

Lack of community support was listed as a concern throughout the four questions. “No community support from council members,” and “When you just closed a school, how can you ask the taxpayers that are not here to pay to build on?” were two comments made by different groups. Another group stated, “Very concerning that bond referendums have not passed in past, it's how we got to point we're in.”

#### **Removal of Individual Spaces**

There were several questions regarding specific spaces that were mentioned in the different options. Some comments are recorded below.

- “Is the bus garage really necessary? Maybe eliminate that cost now.”
- “High School – In Option 1 and 2 I DO NOT LIKE where Room 13 is (or turn it). It would look better off the Ag room.”
- Do there need to be shower rooms at the elementary?”
- “Multi-purpose room/gym”
- “New Science rooms”

### QUESTION THREE

**We asked: *Is there any advice or feedback you'd like to give the Lewiston-Altura Public Schools Board in this planning process? What is that feedback?***

Fifteen of 16 discussion groups submitted a total of 22 responses to this query, making this question the **second highest traction item** of this Discovery Discussion.

Strong communications appeared to be of the highest priority for most groups in responding to this question. Comments include, “ Be transparent,” “Keep sharing so people understand concerns & needs,” and Inform the Voting Community on Ag Tax Credits,” were among several statements regarding communications.

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### QUESTION THREE (Cont'd)

Participants also feel strongly that it is important to improve facilities to attract and retain more students and staff. One group stated, “We need to realize what’s best for kids to teach the best education we can, with outdated facilities, it’s hard to do. It’s hard to attract the best of best staff also.” While another group noted, “Let’s give kids & community a facility to be proud of, not embarrassed,” and “Want to attract to fix declining enrollment.”

Several groups recommended working with the City on community and business development as well as the impact the facility changes may have on the city infrastructure. Other comments and questions are included below.

- “Aim high – no better time then now”
- “Take each line item & decide if it will make it safer for the students.”
- “YouTube video you can watch to get the info out.”
- “We all recognize how thorough the process has been and appreciate how all stakeholders have been included in discussions.”

### QUESTION FOUR

**We asked: *Is there any question/comment that we should have asked but didn’t? Please share the question and your answer to it as well.***

This open-ended question received responses from seven out of 16 discussion groups, with a collective total of 15 individual responses, making this ***the lowest traction question*** of the Discovery Discussion. The key themes included:

1. Further explanation of state funding and tax impacts
2. Future enrollment projections
3. Partnership/Communication with City
4. Timelines and phasing of options

A few questions offered for this item are stated below.

- “In Option 3 – how long before repairs would be needed on the new structure?”
- “City plans for expansion?”
- “How/what can be done to bring more people/students to our community? Open land for building?”

The complete list of questions and comments for this discussion item can be found in the following Raw Data.

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### DISCOVERY DISCUSSION | RAW RESPONSE DATA AGGREGATE

**Question 1:** *Was there an option or anything you heard today that you liked? What would you keep & why?*

**Response groups:** 16/16

**Total responses:** 49

**Raw response rank:** 1/4

[Group 1]

- We like that improvements are being discussed – Why did it take so long?
- We liked Option 3 because if you keep chipping away at Option 1, there will always be a need for improvements and never get to Option 3.
- We as a group have young kids and will benefit but for those with grandkids will benefit also.

[Group 2]

- Expanded science
- Auditorium
- Scheduling conflicts would be avoided

[Group 3]

- Upgraded facilities
- Bus drop off areas
- How are we going to keep students at LA or bring in new students?
- Need more kitchen space

[Group 4]

- Appreciate the various options. Need to consider what we like in the options vs. what can actually pass.
- Security/Safety
- Science facilities
- Arts, Band, Choir facilities

[Group 5]

- Liked options
- Liked separate spaces for gym & auditorium

[Group 6]

- We liked the all in, but too much money. It's the only option with Auditorium. We feel an auditorium is necessary.
- Option 1 is necessary to maintain what we have and provide safety to both students & staff.

[Group 7]

- We all would like to see the “all-in” option, but are nervous of its feasibility. We feel that updated facilities are crucial in attracting students & staff.



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### [Group 8]

- Do like All-in – Best value for \$, concerns about paying need to be expressed, how it affects each type of taxpayer.
- Area schools have done well with their improvements
- Great job explaining options
- Auditorium option would be very well used in community, same thing with new game gym.
- Entry area MUST be updated, office

### [Group 9]

- Improvements to Science rooms
- Safety improvements
- Shop improvements
- Can new playground be funded in other ways?

### [Group 10]

- Detailed & thorough
- How much would a new school cost?

### [Group 11]

- Security changes
- Improve functional items
- Elementary walls
- Parking/entrance

### [Group 12]

- Option 1 – liked it & most everything in it.
- Option 2 – only adding additional Science and remodeling existing Science

### [Group 13]

- All-in option, worried about option to pass again in the future, possibly wait another 25 years.
- We are in need of updated larger gymnasium & auditorium.

### [Group 14]

- Basically what the top the public will support.
- Hard to get excited when enrollment is declining.
- We need improvement to regain & attract students & staff.

### [Group 15]

- All-in plan – students need everything on list
- Support operating & facilities plans
- Having 3 options
- Secured entries
- Drop off & pick up plans

### [Group 16]

- We liked the larger classroom sizes,
- Secure entries
- Science lab remodel

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**Question 2: Was there an option or anything you heard today that you didn't like? What would you eliminate & why?**

**Response groups:** 13/16

**Total responses:** 19

**Raw response rank:** 3/4

[Group 1]

- Is the bus garage really necessary? Maybe eliminate that cost now.
- What is the time frame for the construction?

[Group 2]

- Option 1 – is that money put into something that will just need upgraded again in only a few years?

[Group 3]

- No community support from council members.

[Group 5]

- When you just closed a school, how can you ask the taxpayers that are not here to pay to build on?

[Group 6]

- High School – In option 1 and 2 I DO NOT LIKE where Room 13 is (or turn it). It would look better off the Ag room.
- Do there need to be shower rooms at the elementary?

[Group 7]

- We think presenting 3 options could be overwhelming. Option 1 feels like a band-aid, bare bones solution to a bigger problem. Present Options 2 & 3 in order for changes to be evident.

[Group 8]

- Go part-way & band-aid half hearted fixes is NOT a good option.
- Very concerning that bond referendums have not passed in past, it's how we got to point we're in.
- All-in seems to be only way to go.

[Group 9]

- All-in option
- Multi-purpose room/gym
- Bigger rooms but less students

[Group 11]

- Playground @ Elementary

[Group 12]

- New Science rooms

[Group 13]

- Fixing only what is broke now. Barely getting us to code. What will happen in a few more years?

[Group 14]

- Would like any of them.

[Group 16]

- Option 1 will likely require additional work in the years ahead because its not forward thinking enough w/classroom sizes.

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### **Question 3: Is there any advice or feedback you'd like to give the Lewiston-Altura Public Schools Board in this planning process? What is that feedback?**

**Response groups:** 15/16

**Total responses:** 22

**Raw response rank:** 2/4

[Group 1]

- Be transparent.

[Group 2]

- Keep sharing so people understand concerns & needs.
- We need to realize what's best for kids to teach the best education we can, with outdated facilities, it's hard to do. It's hard to attract the best of best staff also.

[Group 4]

- Inform the Voting Community on Ag Tax Credits.

[Group 5]

- YouTube video you can watch to get the info out.
- Give specific examples of how inadequate structure is effecting learning.

[Group 6]

- Continue communication w/City Council to try to grow school & community together.

[Group 7]

- We all recognize how thorough the process has been and appreciate how all stakeholders have been included in discussions.

[Group 8]

- Let's market it well to get to people that aren't here.
- Show benefits & how it really isn't that much to ask.
- Let's give kids & community a facility to be proud of, not embarrassed.
- Want to attract to fix declining enrollment.

[Group 9]

- Work with City on encouraging new businesses, etc.

[Group 10]

- New facilities encourage more enrollment.
- Need to stay competitive to keep students here.

[Group 11]

- Surrounding Communities & Schools

[Group 12]

- Acres – dollars example

[Group 13]

- Aim high – no better time then now.

[Group 14]

- Take each line item & decide if it will make it safer for the students.

[Group 15]

- May need to discuss additional implications for city infrastructure.
- Is there discussion of combining our district w/St. Charles?

[Group 16]

- Forward thinking

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**Question 4: Is there any question/comment that we should have asked but didn't? Please share the question and your answer to it as well!**

**Response groups: 7/16**

**Total responses: 15**

**Raw response rank: 4/4**

[Group 1]

- In Option 3 – how long before repairs would be needed on the new structure?
- Why is it taking so long to bump up cost per student because right now it's \$51 per student.
- Review Grants and State Funding.

[Group 2]

- Is there options for phases to the options?
- Same with State aid – if you choose Option 1 & get 40% aid.

[Group 4]

- How/what can be done to bring more people/students to our community?
- Open land for building?
- Partnership/coordination w/City Council

[Group 6]

- New staff work room (copy room) area on the north side of the building.
- Will flooring & windows be replaced in all areas even though they are not colored in the options? Yes, please. We got the answer from Luke. Thank you!

[Group 7]

- We feel it needs to be explicitly explained to our ag taxpayers about how their taxes will be affected. It didn't seem as clear as we thought it would be tonight.

[Group 11]

- If changes are made, what does enrollment look like beyond '28?
- City plans for expansion?

[Group 12]

- Enrollment – Do we have any indication the trend is going to?
- Deferred maintenance & education adequacy.