

Pleasantdale Elementary School
8100 School Street
La Grange, IL 60525
708.246.4700 Fax: 708.246.4625



Pleasantdale Middle School
7450 S. Wolf Road
Burr Ridge, IL 60527
708.246.3210 Fax: 708.352.0092

Pleasantdale School District 107 | 7450 S. Wolf Road | Burr Ridge, IL 60527 | 708.784.2013 | Fax: 708.246.0161 | www.d107.org

Over the last several months, the District has sought the community's feedback on a proposal to improve the education environment of the District. The main components of the plan included the construction of an early childhood center that would be situated on nine acres of land in Burr Ridge. The proposal also called for reconfiguring the existing buildings that would allow fifth-grade students to remain at the elementary school before transitioning to the middle school in sixth grade. Finally, the proposal provided security upgrades at both existing schools.

During this school year, the District worked to communicate the proposal to the community and to gain insight into the community's support for these projects. The District committed to only pursuing a bond measure if the community supported it. The District took several proactive steps to determine the level of support and communicate the plan. These measures included:

- Communicating the vision and proposal to the community in the District's fall newsletter mailed to all residents.
- Developing a website that sought to inform the community about the proposal and the tax impact and included video presentations and other pertinent information.
- Holding public meetings at both schools to provide community information and hear residents' feedback.
- Convening a Citizen Engagement Committee to provide feedback on the plan and allow for adjustments to the proposal. The Citizen Engagement Committee also allowed the District to test the messaging around the proposal.
- Distribute a community opinion poll to all district homes to allow all residents to provide feedback.
- Discussion of the matter at all Board of Education meetings.

At the most recent Citizen Engagement Committee meeting, attendees reviewed the results of the opinion poll distributed to the community, which collected results from October 17 to November 1. This survey is the best indicator of the likely success of a ballot measure. The survey was mailed to 3,192 households within the school district and contained 18 questions about the District's proposal. The expected response rate for this type of poll is between 8% and 17%; 421 surveys were received, representing 13% of all surveys sent. When broken down, survey demographics include 53% of responses from female residents and 47% from male respondents. The age brackets of 25-44 and 45-54 had the highest response rates at 19% and 21%, respectively, and 66% of respondents do not have a child who attends Pleasantdale schools living in the home. When asked to grade the District, 52% of respondents gave an A/B grade, 19% gave the District a C/D/F grade, and 28% checked *I don't know* when asked to provide a grade.

When District residents were asked to provide a level of support for the individual components of the plan, safety and security garnered the most support, while the construction of an early childhood center received the least support. Highlights of the support levels can be found below.

- Enhancing Safety and Security: 67% support
- Improving STEM facilities at PES: 47% support
- Reconfiguring the PMS parking lot: 44% support
- Right-sizing instructional spaces at both schools: 31% support
- Restoring PES library: 30% support
- Freeing up instructional spaces for special education: 27% support

- Building an early childhood center: 23% support

The opinion poll asked respondents to provide feedback on the tax increase implications. When asked how concerned they were with the proposed tax increase (\$696 on a \$500,000 home), 56% responded extremely concerned, 17% very concerned, 13% somewhat concerned, and 12% not very concerned.

These results reveal a heightened level of tax sensitivity regarding this proposal. When asked how likely they were to vote "yes" for the proposal, should it be on the ballot, 55% responded with definitely no, 16% probably no, 13% probably yes, 12% definitely yes, 4% don't know. These results are a clear indicator that, overall, the respondents do not support the proposal in its current form. The final section of the survey asked respondents to provide feedback on the District's proposal to offer universal PreK. When asked if the District should provide free half-day AND free full-day PreK, 15% responded positively. When asked if the District should offer free half-day PreK and charge tuition for the remainder of the day, 37% responded positively. Finally, when asked about universal PreK tuition models, 42% responded *Don't know*, and 5% did not reply to this question.

After hearing a presentation on the opinion poll, the Citizen Engagement Committee discussed the results and provided the administration with feedback. The Committee engaged in discussion and activities that helped prioritize any improvements or changes that may occur. Several priorities became evident based on the opinion poll results and the Committee's feedback. These priorities include safety and security at both schools, a continued focus on improvements to our PreK program, addressing the developmental needs of our fifth-grade students, improving the current buildings, and developing a plan for the District's future growth.

This feedback was prioritized and formed the basis for the below recommendations to the Board of Education. These recommendations include

1. Implement the security updates at both buildings; the improvements that were discussed can be found below in priority order.
 - a. Add a "double buzz" at the entrance to school offices.
 - b. Add second exits to PES classrooms.
 - c. Reconfigure PMS parking lot/outdoor spaces
 - d. Install traffic barriers at both schools.
 - e. Upgrade the PA system at PMS.
2. Consider purchasing land to prepare for growth and programmatic changes. Comments from the Committee about this recommendation include.
 - a. Land in the District is limited, and the opportunity to purchase land may not be available in the future.
 - b. The land can serve as an appreciable asset.
 - c. The land can provide additional flexibility to the District in the future.
3. Explore an expansion of PreK. Comments from the Committee about this recommendation include.
 - a. An expansion to PreK is valuable but should remain a tuition-based program.
 - b. Provide expanded PreK options while using the current footprint of the schools.
 - c. It is an important priority, but the program's cost must be reasonable.

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4. Explore ways to create a more developmentally appropriate fifth-grade experience. Comments from the Committee about this recommendation include.
 - a. This is a valid and appropriate recommendation.
 - b. Having fifth-grade students at PES could create additional space issues at the school.
 - c. Fifth grade at PES would require additional classroom space.

The District has once again shown that feedback from the community is critical in making decisions that will impact the community's children. Likewise, the District followed through on all commitments made to engage the community in a process that garners feedback and respects the taxpayer. While it seems clear that a ballot measure supporting the current proposal is not likely at this time, there are opportunities to make substantial improvements to our schools and the student experience that better align with the community's expectations and values.