

USD435 Bond Issue

"How would the approval of the USD435 Bond Issue Improve Learning?"

This is a great question and is important to ask. It is difficult to answer because I believe our district is doing a great job of educating students now, however, we always strive to continuously improve.

As far as Garfield is concerned (built in 1942), our administrators and staff always "make it work" with whatever we give them. When the sewer needs to be pumped out our staff and students just make it work. When the temperature is 90 degrees in the winter because there is no way to control the heat, the teachers just open the windows. When we need more space for special education, the principal gives up his office or the teachers give up their workspace. When students need to work in groups – they use the stairwell or hallways. Our educators are masters at making it work.

How much more learning can we achieve in a new environment? This is very difficult to predict. I'm guessing it's like driving a '42 Chevy versus a 2014 Chevy, the 2014 is bound to be more efficient, probably faster, more comfortable, more reliable, safer, and probably can go further. However, we would hope to still get to the desired location in a well-maintained '42 Chevy. Same with the old structure versus the new structure, we have and will continue to work hard to get our students where they need to be but could we go faster, be more efficient, safer, and move further in a structure build for 21st century education? I would like to say yes we could.

Safety and Security - It's just critical. We owe it to our students, their parents, and our staff to do whatever we can to make sure they are as safe as possible so they can focus on teaching and learning. Controlling access to schools, redirecting vehicle traffic, and building additional safe rooms in the new spaces will help make our buildings safer. Will being as safe as possible equate to a 5% increase on our reading scores? Maybe.

Gym, Auditorium, & Locker rooms - Our society did us a disservice when they named school athletics and the arts as "extra curricular". They are far from extra. Over 75% of our high school students participate in these activities. They are a part of what we do and our parents want their children involved.

Our students learn volumes by performing in front of people, working in teams, and getting along with others. They also learn the value of hard work, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, and so much more. The research is clear, when students are involved in extra curricular activities they do better in all other areas in school. Not having the spaces for our students to practice or perform does impact student's ability to have authentic experiences, a critical tool in learning. My hope would be with the new spaces at the high school, we double the opportunities for our children to perform in front of audiences or to get excited about viewing other's performances.

Even though there is not a specified percentage gain to the proposed question, hopefully you can see the Bond Issue has the potential to have great impact on student learning in our community.

On April 1st the community has the opportunity to answer these questions.

Is it time to go beyond “making it work” for our students?

Is it time to add extra classroom spaces addressing increased enrollment (up 40 students this year) and educational changes driven by the law (i.e. Individuals with Disabilities Act - 1975)?

Is it time to offer adequate spaces for student performances?

Is it time to take advantage of the historically low interest rates and the 39% state aid to improve our facilities?

Is it time to improve the safety of the entire mechanism that holds the heartbeat of this community – our children, our future citizens?

Please help answer these questions by VOTING on April 1st.