

September 6, 2017 Community Advisory Committee Questions Submitted

Thank you for attending the September 6, 2017 meeting. There were several comments that were expressed on the index cards submitted. Thank you for your input. Below are the questions that were also submitted for a response. Some questions were grouped together as they addressed similar questions.

There were kids in the 4K program last year through Smiling Faces, why are they not recognized?

All 4K students are included in the Smiling Faces, Head Start and Northwestern Elementary School (NES) programs and used in the head count for funding and enrollment projects.

Let the voters know what cuts have been made.

The following list of cuts totaling 3.7 million dollars over the past five (5) years are included on the survey.

- *Eliminated early retirement contributions*
- *Decreased employee health benefits*
- *Eliminated administrative and staff positions*
- *Eliminated 13 elementary a.m. bus routes*
- *Reduced school and building budgets*
- *Increased class sizes*
- *Combined classes at Iron River Elementary*

Class size – I am a baby boomer who grew up in the Twin Cities where no class was less than 40.

Can class size rise above 24 under 4th grade due to No Child Left Behind?

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction SAGE program (Student Achievement Guarantee of Education) requires no more than 18 students per class in grades K-3. We could not afford to be part of the SAGE program, however studies have shown that lower class sizes do improve student achievement.

Please outline for the voters the master salary plan broken down to dollars per hour.

Teachers are not paid by the hour; in our school district, they have a beginning salary for new teachers with no experience at \$35,000. The ending salary, with a graduate degree (masters or more) after 26 years of service to the District is \$69,000.

Retaining staff – does this mean retaining at current salary schedule (which is not competitive with surrounding Districts, Superior specifically), or does this mean bringing salaries up to a more competitive schedule?

What would it take to bring salaries to a competitive level?

It would take more than the \$607,000 as stated in the survey to make the salary schedule comparable with Superior School District.

Right now, our schedule is nearly identical to the Ashland School District. In our District, starting salary is \$35,000 it takes 26 years, same as in Ashland. Our taxpayers cannot afford doubling the dollar amount it would take to be on the same salary schedule as the Superior School District.

In the Superior School District, it takes 15 years to get from the beginning salary of \$35,505 to get to the top of the salary schedule.

In the South Shore School District, the starting salary is \$35,565 and takes 11 years to reach the top of the salary schedule for those with Bachelor degrees and 13 years for those with a Masters.

Can you better explain salary retention line item, what does it include?

Retain staff – is it possible to vote on primary teacher’s salary increase separately vote on other employee salary increases?

The salary retention line item of \$607,000 includes salary/wage, social security, and WRS (Wisconsin Retirement System – the employers half which is mandated by state law). It does not include health, dental or long-term disability insurance.

We should not vote on primary teacher’s salary separately. We work hard to work as a team to educate all our students early childhood through grade 12. It takes all of our staff to increase student achievement.

I think we should include the number of teachers that have left our District for high pay.

Tell how many teachers have left our District due to low wages and large class sizes.

We agree this information should be shared, however due to limited space on the survey, details such as this will be answered at community meetings which are planned to take place after the survey results. For example, in the past three years, 14 teachers have left the School District of Maple for higher pay in other districts.

Does the amount for staff retention include raises for the administration?

Yes.

Is the unfair practice of hiring replacement teachers a higher rate than current teacher's being eliminated?

There is a state-wide shortage of educators, more so in certain subject areas. However, in high-need and extreme shortage areas where applicants are few and are interviewing in multiple districts, we need to stay competitive to secure the best candidate for our students.

Have you looked at hiring teachers who have bachelors without a teaching license?

In the State of Wisconsin there are strict rules that apply to certification and licensing of educators. Technology education is the only area which allows some flexibility for those who have experience rather than the teacher certification which usually takes five (5) years of college education to secure.

What has the staff, teachers, and administrator's salaries been increased over the last 3 years?

All staff, including support staff (bus drivers, mechanic, food service, paraeducators, administrative assistant staff, custodians) teachers, middle management and administrator's salaries have had salary freezes in four (4) out of the last ten years.

In the past two years, increases have been made to adjust the teacher, middle management and administrative staff salaries to where they would have been if no freezes had occurred. Support staff received a small increase; and we will be reviewing comparable wages for support staff in the 2017-18 school year.

With the square miles the school District serves, have you looked at other Districts with similar miles to see how they save money on transportation?

Analyzing the bus routes and the most efficient use of our bus fleet has been and is an ongoing process. We use computer software "Transfinder" to develop efficient and cost effective bus routes. Also used is software called "Zonar" which helps us locate and track buses enroute if necessary. Most school Districts with our square miles qualify for sparsity transportation aid. We do not qualify for this funding because our District student total is over the 1,000 student cap.

Have you looked into contracting with Lakeshore busing in Ashland?

A study was conducted four years ago; and we will do another request for bids to help with a comparison. Regional busing contractors will be contacted.

Would the District consider purchasing vans to transport Iron River kids instead of buses?

Yes, if the enrollment would ever be small enough, no viable option would be overlooked. Currently there are 95 K-5 students at the Iron River Elementary School. This enrollment has increased slightly from 2016-17.

As an IR parent I would like to know specifically how the IR elementary school would be affected. Would a school closure be something considered?

We are not considering closing the Iron River Elementary School (IRES) at this time. Bus routes are already long enough for those students who live on the outskirts of our 500 square mile district.

How can the school justify the Iron River Elementary School when in a time of deficit?

In 2016-17 a comparison study of personnel was done between the cost to educate students at IRES and NES. All staff salaries were divided by the number of students in each school. It costs approximately \$300 more to educate a child at the Iron River Elementary School (IRES) than at Northwestern Elementary School (NES). However, building costs are \$2.93 per square foot at IRES and \$3.16 per square foot at NES.

Next to salaries, transportation is our highest cost. It would be a significant increase to bus those students to NES, and it would lengthen the busing time by another 25 minutes which would make the routes average one hour and twenty-five minutes one way. Also of importance is that there is not enough room to accommodate an additional 95 students at NES as they already educate 429+ students.

Why do we need to update the middle school stage lighting when it is used very little? Most use the Pat Luostari Auditorium now.

We agree that we should only include "high need" items so we removed the stage lighting from the survey.

What is the cost of the football field/maintain it vs. revenue brought in by the sports played on it?

How long before the turf needs to be replaced on the football field. Life span was said to be 10-12 years when it was installed. What will be the cost to replace it?

Because of the excellent maintenance by our staff, the football field will outlast the 10-12 year projection by at least another 10 years. The cost to replace the field turf would be \$350,000.

Having a town hall meeting in Iron River would be a good consideration to understand these cuts being made in Iron River.

We will be scheduling meetings in all of our municipalities including Iron River to answer any questions you may have. When scheduled, those meeting dates will be sent to parents via Skyward, will be posted on our web site, and put in the Superior Telegram, Connection and County Journal whenever possible.

Please elaborate on the business case or specific dollars associated with the various cost reduction options. Include additional fees that could be associated with extracurricular activities.

The big costs saved are that the District is no longer paying 100% of the employee retirement, (only the employer's share that is mandated by state law). Also another large cost savings was reducing the health insurance benefits and increasing deductibles for all employees. We have also eliminated early retirement benefits for employees. These three items saved 2.5 million over the course of four (4) years. The removal of the district-funded retirement benefits also plays a role in why some teachers are leaving us. In addition, the State reduced our aid by at least this amount.

We have combined classes at IRES for kindergarten/first grade and second grade/third grade for art, music, and physical education. There are 30 students in the afternoon for kindergarten and 1st grade and 25 in the combined 2nd and 3rd grade. We have eliminated through attrition, absorbed and reduced staffing and fringes, totaling \$449,315 in 2017-18 alone. As class sizes become smaller, we are analyzing ways to be more efficient while trying to offer as many options to our students and families as possible. However, there is not much left to cut without affecting programs and the lay-off of additional staff.

What options have been considered for additional streams of revenue? (We have great buildings and grounds and equipment.)

We have been extremely active in trying to recruit our home-based schooling families in the District to increase our enrollment by offering online classes and curriculum. We do charge outside for-profit organizations to use our school buildings and they reimburse the District for the costs of any staff that may be utilized. We did a "Drive 4UR Schools" fundraiser for technology that brought \$6,900 into the District in 2016 and in 2017 it was \$5,080. We use the "Cash for Kids" Midland Services program annually for technology as well, this year, and we received a check for \$4,717.06.

We have just started our second year of the "Tiger's Den" before and after school childcare program. The Tiger's Den cleared, after costs, \$26,977 in 2016-17.

How does summer school impact funding? (Offerings seemed to be less this past summer – grow this).

Summer school students are prorated by minutes of attendance. In 2017, the total Full-time Equivalency (FTE) was 6 FTE. This equates to \$56,592 of revenue. In order to receive funding for summer school, classes must be taught by a Wisconsin certified teacher. We would love to expand the summer school program. We can only offer classes as we have teachers willing to teach them.

Can you let people know on the survey what will be cut if this does not go through?

What will be cut if we do not pass the referendum?

What happens if the referendum fails?

What is the cost to do nothing? What will be cut?

The survey, which will provide information to the Board of Education and administration on what is valued by our public, will be used to make informed, comprehensive decisions on all programming, staffing and other budget cuts. The Board of Education will make the decision to go to referendum based on the level of support. Specifics cannot be determined until we hear from the community through the survey.

Unfortunately without a successful referendum, we are forced to make an additional \$576,000 or more in cuts. This will most surely increase class sizes 4K-12 and reduced programming.

We need more marketing and education on the real issues. Folks need to understand the impact of a failed referendum and benefit of a successful referendum.

We agree. An additional information meeting on the survey to answer questions like those in this FAQ is scheduled for Thursday, October 12, 2017 at 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Patricia Luostari Auditorium.

Is this a 5-year plan? And if it is, what is your plans after 5 years?

It is a 5-year plan. It's difficult to plan further than five (5) years as state funding has been sporadic.

Have businesses been called?

Donations from companies?

Our local businesses pay school taxes just the same as residents. Unfortunately and unlike Superior or Ashland, we do not have the large industry base helping to support our schools beyond their tax obligation. Almost all of the businesses residing in the

School District of Maple are small, family-owned and already contribute to various causes and fundraising efforts within our boundaries.

Any trust funds for scholarships? Ongoing?

A total package of \$100,550 in scholarship money was provided to 49 graduating seniors at the conclusion of the 2017 school year. The money that is provided does not belong to the District, it is donated by trusts or private parties and is strictly for student use to further their education.

Fundraising for owning something of the school kind of like DECC now Amsoil?

Our schools are paid for by state and public dollars. Private naming rights would require a change in board policy if any interest would be expressed.

How much revenue does the student house builders bring in?

Typically it is anywhere between \$2,000 to \$5,000, which has been directly put back into the Technology Education program.

I didn't understand the lady in the front row. Question?

It was questioned at the September 6 meeting, "What happened to the \$100,000 donation that was supplied to the Technology Education/Tiger Manufacturing class for equipment?" While this large donation was discussed last school year with the previous technology education teacher, it did not happen and no money was received. The new technology education teacher is re-growing a relationship with Ashley Furniture, who initiated supporting the Tiger Manufacturing program through donation.

Donations from families - have you gone after anything like this?

Yes. Fundraisers are many, unfortunately. They finance some field trips and student activities that have been already cut from the District budget. We also have a "Wall of Fame" by the athletic complex. Those naming tiles are obtained through the athletic office. Proceeds go to the "N' Club. While we are most grateful for donations, we try to not solicit donations from our families. However for special trips or items it does happen (i.e. the choir tours among others).

Grants?

Are there grants the District is actively pursuing? E-rate as an example . . . this can help offset some of the costs.

We have continually applied and received grants to help enhance our special education program and teacher education in technology. This year alone it includes but is not limited to: WTI (Wisconsin Technology Initiative) \$24,878; AODA/Link Crew Grant

(Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse) \$14,995; Middle School Bullying Grant: \$15,000; \$8,000 SOARING (Special Education-Autism Training); and several others such as Peer Review/Mentor Grant, Educator Effectiveness Grant, Financial Literacy Grant, TEACH Grant, Acellus Grant have all been applied for and almost all of these grants were achieved and funds issued.

Again, these grants are for specific teacher training and maintaining student programs. Unfortunately, there are no grants out there for operational costs or funding of staff salaries.

We have always filed for E-rate funding which goes directly into telecommunications and wireless infrastructure. For example the District was just awarded \$33,262 at a 70% funding level to cover \$47,518 of high speed replacement wireless transmitters and high speed switches.

Alumni grants?

There are none that can be used for any other reason than student-scholarship purposes. None. Also, typically all graduating classes turn their unused monies to be used for the Chemical-Free Graduation Party.

If 75% of the taxpayers don't have kids, I think the survey needs to be restructured to appeal to them by showing the costs cut, what sacrifices educators have made and what will happen if the referendum doesn't pass. Show a breakdown of costs: % of kids on free or reduced lunches? What are these kids costing the District in meals/sports/college credits, etc.?

Please note that on the first page of the survey, we detail what was already eliminated: In the past ten years, we have made significant reductions to balance our budget including:

- Eliminating early retirement contributions*
- Decreasing employee health benefits*
- Eliminating administrative and staff positions*
- Eliminating 13 elementary a.m. bus routes*
- Reducing school and building budgets*
- Increasing class sizes*
- Combining classes at Iron River Elementary*

These efforts represent more than \$3.7 million in reductions.

In 2016-17, the District's qualifying free and reduced meal participants made up 40% of the school's population. While this number may seem high, it was not high enough to qualify the District for several grants. The District would need to be at least 50% to qualify for all severe need grants. The federal meal program reimburses the District for

those who qualify for the free and reduced meals so our federal tax dollars pays for this program.

What revenue does Tiger Fitness bring in? Is there a way to increase with better equipment and daycare?

The Tiger Fitness Center is managed by Essential Health. They provided the majority of equipment, they pay their own telephone and they employ their own staff to work it. Our students use the Fitness Center at no cost.

Why is the cost for sports so high? Pressure on sports associations to lower costs, as I assume all Districts are in this scenario. You show parents pay \$23,000. What does the District pay? Is there a % or ratio?

WIAA (Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletics Association), which is the sports organization that governs high school sports, has waived their membership fees for the past two (2) years. If parents are paying a high cost to have their child participate in sports outside of those offered through the District, they need to contact the association as those are not school-sponsored activities.

Our athletic budget is: \$230,000. We collected \$28,000 for event admission, \$23,000 collected sports fees from other schools totaled \$34,857 for tournaments, invitationals, etc. Total revenue from the sports programs is: \$85,857. So total cost to the District is \$144,143.

Of special note: *When we get inquiries from parents/guardians of students who are looking to move into our school District, they ask about our co-curricular offerings, including drama, music, athletics, and clubs available as this is what makes for an enjoyable experience for their student while at school. They already know how high our testing statistics are, as these are available on the DPI website and linked from our webpage.*

The National Center for Education Statistics states, "Almost every high school in the U.S. offers some type of extracurricular activity, such as music, academic clubs, and sports. These activities offer opportunities for students to learn the values of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, diversity, and a sense of culture and community.

Extracurricular activities provide a channel for reinforcing the lessons learned in the classroom, offering students the opportunity to apply academic skills in a real-world context, and are thus considered part of a well-rounded education. Recent research suggests that participation in extracurricular activities may increase students' sense of engagement or attachment to their school, and thereby decrease the likelihood of school failure and dropping out."

How many kids who receive free/reduced lunch play sports? (Is there really a cost saving to these families if they can afford cigs and alcohol they can afford to pay a sports fee. It's called money management.)

There were 21 students who qualified for free lunch that played sports with no athletic fee (\$75). There were 19 students who qualified for reduced lunch that played sports and paid half (\$37.50) of the sport athletic fee.

$$21 \times \$75 = \$1,575$$

$$19 \times \$37.50 = \$712.50 \quad \text{Total of } \$2,287.50$$

Validation code by postal mail may hurt survey participation, is there a way to online validate?

By sending out the survey in October you are missing comments by 75% of my neighbors who are seasonal retired and move south.

If two adults are in a household, can each complete a survey?

The survey will be mailed first class so all those who left a forwarding address will receive and be able to participate in the survey online. If you would rather it be sent electronically, contact Peggy Janigo at pjanigo@nw-tigers.org. Please include your physical address with your request.

Yes, three days after the paper copy arrives in your mail, if you wish to give us your email, you can receive an electronic version.

And yes, two people can complete the survey in the same household. You can call our office at 715-363-2431, ext. 2264 for an additional code number to complete the survey. You do need to provide your name and address when calling.

How do you account for taxpayers who do not live in the School District of Maple?

Do you have to be a registered voter to vote on the referendum or a taxpayer?

The same rules of residency applies to referendum ballots as does voting for school board members. Your main residence, where you live and have registered to vote for those running for public office, is where you vote. You could only vote for or against a referendum in the School District of Maple (should one be held) if you lived within our school District boundaries.

Why are we losing or less students coming into the District?

What has been the trend with open enrolled student numbers?

Please elaborate on root cause behind the decrease in enrollment. How many students have left because they are not satisfied with the quality of the education?

Actually as far as we know, there are only a few who leave the District because of dissatisfaction with the quality of education. There are those who feel Superior, being a larger school District, would have more programming to offer. There are those who feel the South Shore District, because it is smaller, offers more one-on-one instruction. And a small number leave the District because surrounding schools may have less stringent graduation requirements.

We can only speculate, but one thing we know for sure - families are having less children. Another major reason is lack of affordable housing for families. We have no industry or employment with higher paying jobs to bring in or keep families for employment reasons, and our lakes properties are very costly for a growing family.

Also, we do have more children (and always have) open enrolling into our District rather than out to other school Districts. We only see a portion of state aid for those who open enroll in.

We also see a gradual trend in less families participating in homebased education.

The following is a 10-year history of enrollment with school districts near ours. Declining enrollment has been an issue for several years for all of our districts. Enrollment information was taken from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction statistical center. Enrollment information for 2016-17 is not available at this time.

School District	2006 Enrollment	2016 Enrollment	Percentage Decrease
Ashland	2,218	2,127	4.10%
Drummond	519	385	25.82%
Northwood	445	348	25.82%
Solon Springs	350	260	25.71%
South Shore	201	156	22.39%
Superior	4,768	4,704	1.34%
Maple	1,415	1,370	3.2%
Maple Enrollment – 2017		1,315	7.07%

Maple is down 56 students in the past two years and will continue to decrease as there are only three classes at the high school level that are at 100 or above.

Please see the next enrollment chart, which is current as of our DPI Third Friday Enrollment Count, which was September 15, 2017:

IRON RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Grade K - 18
 Grade 1 - 12
 Grade 2 - 13

ENROLLMENT – 95

Grade 3 - 12
 Grade 4 - 25
 Grade 5 - 15

NORTHWESTERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Grade Pre - 5
 *Grade 4K - 77
 Grade K - 73
 Grade 1 - 69

ENROLLMENT - 519

Grade 2 - 70
 Grade 3 - 73
 Grade 4 - 88
 Grade 5 - 64

NORTHWESTERN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Grade 6 - 95
 Grade 7 - 91

ENROLLMENT - 286

Grade 8 - 90

NORTHWESTERN HIGH SCHOOL

Grade 9 - 97
 Grade 10 - 106

ENROLLMENT – 415

Grade 11 - 107
 Grade 12 - 105

*Includes enrollment from Community Collaborative Partners: Smiling Faces Latchkey and Family Forum Headstart

TOTAL PreK-12 ENROLLMENT = 1,315

Could we begin a 4K program in Iron River? Too low of enrollment?

Smiling Faces Latchkey Program in Iron River is our Community Collaborative Partner for 4K. We have a contract with Smiling Faces and pay them a portion of the money we receive from state aid for enrollment, the remainder of the state aid covers curriculum, transportation and other District expenses for 4K. This payment helps Smiling Faces to teach essentially the same curriculum with an experienced, DPI licensed teacher. Family Forum Headstart in Brule is also another Community Collaborative Partner with the District.

How successful is the activity bus in the evening? Cost? Use?

We had a total of 2,025 riders on the activity buses in 2016-17 for (3) three buses heading in different directions throughout the District. For salary costs alone, not counting fuel and mileage on the buses. It averages to \$8.12 per student per bus ride. If we include fuel and mileage it amounts to \$11.09 per student per bus ride.

Our concern is by not having an activity bus, it would eliminate some of those who would like to participate in activities in grades 6 through 12, especially at the middle

school level who do not have an option to get home because their parents work or are unable to transport them.

Have we considered providing laptops for all high school students as some school have went to? If so, could this funding for technology be used in other schools i.e. NES, NMS.

We use BYOD (bring your own device) and for those who cannot afford or do not have internet at home, we provide Chromebooks that students can use at school. Students are also able to check out Chromebooks overnight.

What does the District pay Brule and Iron River for softball and baseball fields?

The District does not pay the Towns of Brule or Iron River for the softball and baseball field use, it is provided gratis.

Has the District considered online textbooks that are updated on an ongoing basis?

At this point in time, the cost of accessing textbooks comes at the same price as purchasing hard cover books. Only after we pay for the hard cover book, are we allowed access to the online version at no cost.

What year was the first notable decrease in class sizes?

Below is the enrollment and membership numbers reported at the September 2016 annual meeting of our 3rd Friday enrollment count. We added the 2016-17 for the purpose of this question.

Membership is the number funded by the State of Wisconsin for enrollment and includes open enrollment and summer school students. Since the 2010-11 enrollment declined 129 students, membership declined 156 students.

The following chart used the 2nd Friday in January Count for compilation.

	<u>ELEMENTARY</u>	<u>MIDDLE SCHOOL</u>	<u>HIGH SCHOOL</u>	<u>ENROLLMENT TOTAL</u>	<u>MEMBERSHIP</u>
2016-17	617	280	440	1,337	1,273
2015-16	642	299	440	1,381	1,285
2014-15	628	303	451	1,382	1,305
2013-14	651	320	435	1,406	1,332

2012-13	688	344	417	1,449	1,354
2011-12	688	335	431	1,454	1,369
2010-11	685	353	428	1,466	1,429

Did a noticeable number of students leave 2015-16 or 2016-17, was busing changes an effect of decline?

As larger classes with 100 or more students have been graduating, small classes with 80-90 students have replaced them. We saw no decreased enrollment due to streamlining the busing.

How much was the last referendum – what was it for/when?

The last referendum approved by the voters was for \$33 million dollars in 2006. The referendum built the new Northwestern High School, remodeled Northwestern Middle School and the Iron River Elementary School, built a new bus maintenance facility, and a forcemain wastewater system and line to the Poplar wastewater system.

*There is misinformation circulating that the athletic complex, which includes the track and football field, was paid for out of referendum dollars. **This is not true.** Additionally, no property tax levies were ever increased for any of the Athletic Complex construction costs.*

The track at the high school had to be abandoned due to disintegration and we could no longer hold meets as it was unsafe. The old football field was destroyed during construction of the new high school because earthmovers were not allowed to travel through designated wetlands at the northeast end of the football field. It would have cost several hundred thousand dollars to remove the dirt and take it offsite.

Near the end of the high school project, it became clear that the track, football field, and other field sports areas were unusable. A plan was obtained from an engineering firm and subsequently brought to the board Buildings and Grounds Committee and then to the full School Board for approval subject to finding financing separate from the \$33 million referendum project. State Trust Fund Loans were obtained, which will end during the 2019-20 budget year and are being paid out of the General Fund 10 revenues within the state allowed revenue caps.

Additionally, the artificial turf protects our students from concussions and is the safest surface to avoid further injuries. Careful maintenance will continue to lengthen the life of the field.

Can referendum monies be used for anything other than what would be listed on the ballot?

The DPI strictly monitors all referendum expenditures so that they are only used for the items as presented to the voters.

If you need clarification or have other questions, please do not hesitate to call the District Office at 715-373-2431, Ext. 2264.