

**Norridge School District 80**

8151 W. Lawrence Avenue

Norridge, Illinois 60706

708-583-2068

*Inspiring Educational Excellence in a Nurturing Environment*

June 9, 2016

Dear Friends, Colleagues and Community Members:

Norridge School District 80 remains committed to providing a quality education at the lowest possible cost to our taxpayers.

For the past 24 years, the district has maintained two exceptional neighborhood schools—John V. Leigh School and James Giles School. These are schools that are within walking distance for most students and which children can attend from kindergarten until the time they are ready for high school.

In addition to our rigorous core curriculum, our two neighborhood schools also offer a number of important signature programs: instrumental music (band), world languages, industrial arts as well as other art and music offerings. The district also gets all children off to a great start in school by offering full-day kindergarten classes.

In order to sustain the district's signature programs and full-day kindergarten—as well as properly preparing students to compete in a 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy by expanding the district's offering of more rigorous science, technology, education and mathematics (STEM) programs—additional funding is needed. There is also a need to tackle critical school building improvements to enhance safety and security, reduce costly emergency repairs, and enhance student success.

For many years, homeowners have benefited from our district's low tax rate. Unfortunately, we cannot sustain our current programs—and properly maintain our facilities—based on this current funding level. In fact, Norridge 80 faces deficits of up to \$1.8 million in the next two years.

Is doing nothing an option? Unfortunately, it is no. Norridge 80 must either obtain additional voter-approved funding or make cuts to staffing, signature programs, athletics, clubs and full-day kindergarten. Instructional technology upgrades would also need to be put on hold. And without additional local funding, the district will definitely not be able to add more rigorous STEM programming. Monies will also need to be shifted from the classroom to tackle critical life safety issues within our school buildings.

Norridge 80 assembled a Stakeholder Advisory Committee comprised of leaders in the community to evaluate the district's operating and facility needs and various funding options. Before making a final recommendation to the Board of Education as to a specific tax proposal and facility improvements that should be pursued, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee will be seeking your input on three options:

- ✓ **Option 1** would fund (a) \$2.5 million annually for ongoing operations, including maintain existing signature programs, continuing to provide full-day kindergarten, and the addition of STEM programming, and (b) heavy renovations to both John V. Leigh School and James Giles School. The total cost of the facility improvements at both schools is estimated to be \$35.7 million and would include new secure building entryways and controls, energy efficiency upgrades, ADA accessibility improvements, upgrades to classrooms, science rooms, library/learning centers and gym lockers, play field improvements, and other high priority upgrades. The estimated tax impact of Option 1 is \$30.40 per month, or \$364.79 per year, per \$100,000 of a home's actual value.

- ✓ **Option 2** would fund (a) \$2.5 million annually for ongoing operations, including maintain existing signature programs, continuing to provide full-day kindergarten, and the addition of STEM programming, and (b) replacement of both John V. Leigh School and James Giles School on their existing sites with new schools, improvements totaling \$68.8 million. The existing school buildings would stay in place until each new school was built. Each new school would be built on their existing play field area. Construction would take place during the school year, with the existing buildings demolished in the summer months (once the new schools are completed). The estimated tax impact of Option 2 is \$43.52 per month, or \$522.25 per year, per \$100,000 of a home's actual value.
  
- ✓ **Option 3** would fund (a) \$2.5 million annually for ongoing operations, including maintain existing signature programs, continuing to provide full-day kindergarten, and the addition of STEM programming, and (b) construction of one new "combined school" at a new location within the district, a project totaling an estimated \$60.6 million. The one new school would be broken up in to smaller units—known as academic houses—allowing the school to feel smaller and more intimate, particularly for younger students. The elementary school wing (Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade) would be separated from the middle school (Grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>), but would be linked. The link would include all shared programs such as district offices, gymnasium and cafeteria. The estimated tax impact of Option 3 is \$40.27 per month, or \$483.27 per year, per \$100,000 of a home's actual value.

In the next few weeks, Norridge School District 80 will be mailing to you a public opinion survey. The survey will provide greater detail on each of the above-mentioned proposals (including preliminary renderings) as well as the opportunity for you to lend your thoughts and recommendations on how the district should proceed. Your feedback will play an important role in the decisions of both the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the Board of Education with regard to how best to address the district's operating and facility needs.

The Board of Education will be making a final decision regarding placing a tax rate increase on the November 8, 2016 ballot in August, providing time for additional public input.

Thank you in advance for your participation in the upcoming public opinion mail survey. You—our taxpayers—have the final word on how we proceed in addressing the needs of our neighborhood schools. We greatly appreciate everything you do for our local schools and our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul O'Malley', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

Dr. Paul O'Malley  
Superintendent of Schools