



## Phase 2 Community Engagement Report

Over the past few months, Glen Ellyn School District 41 has continued to look to the community to guide us as we determine the path forward for our schools. So far, we have received feedback from 800 members of the community through in-person presentations, an online survey, and a scientific phone survey on what improvements they would like to see to their schools and how they would like to fund those improvements.

Phase 2 of community engagement was conducted in May and June of 2022. Using information provided by the district and their experts, we developed a “menu” of potential individual projects, potential infrastructure solutions, and potential funding levels. Throughout this phase, the district has been closely listening to the community as individuals considered and ranked each item on the menu to share their priorities.

District 41 has continued to take active steps to engage the community and solicit feedback. To achieve this, we updated messaging, met with the Community Committee for an in-depth discussion, engaged key influencers, conducted a public phone survey, and held four public engagement sessions (three in person and one virtual) at different times and days of the week to ensure all community members could participate. Feedback from the community was documented through notes taken of all direct communications, responses provided via paper and digital forms at the Community Committee meeting and public engagement sessions, and spreadsheets generated from the results of the scientific phone survey. We received tremendous levels of engagement and feedback in Phase 2, gathering 164 responses from engagement sessions and online feedback as well as 527 phone survey responses.

We will continue our efforts to engage the community through August 2022 to determine the vision for our schools going forward. This community direction is determining the district’s path forward. In Phase 3 of this process, we will develop three options for the community’s review and feedback based on information gathered from the community during Phase 2. Feedback will be solicited on the district’s website, on feedback forms at another Community Committee discussion, and through another public phone survey. Phase 3 will be conducted in June and July, with a report made to the board at the phase’s conclusion.

## **Messaging**

The district continued to use messaging to properly communicate how we got to this point, what our successes and challenges have been, and how to approach the path forward. This messaging detailed recent progression and improvements as well as the district's space challenges and limited opportunities as a result. The five key takeaways from the messaging are below, and a full copy of the messaging is provided with this report.

- Glen Ellyn School District 41 is excellence. As a high achieving and high growth district, we provide students with opportunities that are transformational, opportunities that other districts around us do not offer.
- There is a strong sense of community in our schools because we put students first. Our community comes together in District 41 on behalf of our kids. This commitment to excellence shows in our students' performance.
- However, we face significant challenges due to a lack of space and are stretched beyond capacity. We are overcrowded and don't have the space to control our class sizes, offer full-day kindergarten, grow our gold-status preschool, or add innovative programs.
- Removing these barriers and solving our space needs would allow us to provide better learning environments, helping our students thrive. We'd be able to keep class sizes small in our neighborhood schools and continue building innovative opportunities for kids.
- The community has come together in 2022 to collaborate on this solution. Working together, we are developing a community-driven plan that will make our schools better than ever so we can continue to deliver the excellence that everyone has come to expect.

## **Menu Survey**

During Phase 2, the district conducted a public phone survey to gauge support for each potential individual project, potential infrastructure solution, and potential funding level. For each item discussed, respondents were given information on each item as well as estimated costs. The survey was taken before the full public had been educated on the projects or fully informed of the district's needs. This was done in order to obtain an accurate representation of the public's unbiased, intuitive reactions to the projects and funding levels contained in the survey.

The results from the menu survey are provided with this report.

## **Community Committee**

The Community Committee met to provide the district with direct input. The committee is a cross-section of District 41 stakeholders, including parents, taxpayers without children in the district, business owners, elected officials, and parents.

The committee met on May 12 during Phase 2. Committee engagement will continue throughout the remainder of the community engagement.

Attached is a report of the feedback that was collected from the committee during Phase 2 of this process.

## **Public Engagement**

The district held 4 public engagement sessions at different times, locations and days to provide all members of the District 41 community an opportunity to attend. These events were promoted through emails, social media and direct mail.

Phase 2 public engagement sessions were held:

- Saturday, May 14 at 10 am at Forest Glen Elementary School.
- Wednesday, May 18 at 6:30 pm at Hadley Jr. High School.
- Tuesday, May 24 at 6:30 pm at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School.
- Thursday, May 26 at 6:30 pm virtually through Zoom webinar.

Verbal discussions occurred during these meetings and additional collaboration opportunities were made available as well through feedback forms. The presentation and feedback forms were made available on the district's website.

Attached is a report of the feedback that was collected from the attendees at the public engagement sessions during Phase 2 of this process.

## **Phase 2 Analysis**

In forming our analysis of Phase 2, we reviewed all data points provided by members of the community. First, through the menu survey, which gives us a scientifically accurate snapshot of the intuitive reactions of members of the community to the items being discussed. Second, through the public engagement sessions, which give us the more passionate responses from community members very invested in their schools who have taken some time to consider these issues. Third, through the Community Committee, whose responses come after hours of discussion, allowing us to track the movement of opinions as individuals become more engaged and educated on these topics.

An important data point for processes like this is the favorability of the school district, because the success of any future effort is tied to how residents feel about the district. Here, the phone survey provides good news: D41 residents have a very favorable opinion of their schools. 71% rate their district favorably while only 22% rate their district unfavorably. This gives the district a net favorability rating of +50%, which is very strong. Clearly D41 residents support their schools and are appreciative of the work being done by the district.

## **Potential Individual Projects**

The general public supports nearly all potential individual projects tested, though with clear favorites. Maintaining Lower Class Sizes is the most supported (+47%). Next, with very strong support, are Full-Day Kindergarten (+35%), Programming & Specials (+34%), and Student Resources & Supports (+28%). Three more projects are supported: Collaborative Spaces (+13%), Expanded Lunchrooms (+12%), and Infrastructure (+11%). The least supported projects are Storage Space (+2%), Pre-K Expansion (+1%), and Parking & Student Drop Off (-10%).

While support levels from the general public are important to review, the most important data to inspect is the ranking data gathered from the phone survey, public engagement, and community committee. This gives us the best look at the community's priorities.

D41 residents have one clear top priority: Maintaining Lower Class Sizes. This is followed closely by Full-Day Kindergarten as the community's second highest priority.

The next two priorities for residents are Student Resources & Supports and Programming & Specials.

Next, lower in priority but still supported, are Pre-K Expansion, Infrastructure, Collaborative Spaces, and Expanded Lunchrooms.

The community's lowest priorities are Parking & Student Drop Off and Storage Space.

## **Potential Infrastructure Solutions**

The general public supports all three infrastructure solutions: Construct Additions (+12%), Build a New Elementary School (+11%), and Build an Early Learning Center (+8%).

The rankings show a strong preference by the community to Construct Additions or Build a New Elementary School. Building an Early Learning Center lagged as the lowest in preference.

### **Potential Funding Levels**

The public shows support for providing additional funding to D41, with overall support for the funding levels tested and, notably, only 21% favoring no additional funding for the district.

As is typical, the general public shows the highest levels of support for the lowest funding levels. They most support the Low funding level (+26%), followed by the Medium funding level (+17%). They are slightly opposed to the High funding level (-5%), but it's important to note the highest funding level typically gets much more opposition at this early stage. This is shown in the general public's priorities, as they choose the Medium funding level the most, followed closely by the High funding level and low funding level.

Those more connected and more passionate about D41 are slightly more favorable towards increased levels of funding, though their priorities match the general public's: the Medium funding level first, then the High funding level, then the Low funding level.

The committee of individuals who are the most informed on D41's challenges and the items discussed in this process show even more support for increased levels of funding. Their top choice is the High funding level, then the Medium funding level, then the Low funding level.

As we typically see, the more individuals are connected to the district, the more they support investing in their schools.

### **Developing Options for Phase 3**

Using this data and working with the district and the district's experts, we will develop three options for the public to consider.

Each option should address the public's top four priorities as much as possible: Maintaining Lower Class Sizes, Full-Day Kindergarten, Student Resources & Supports, and Programming & Specials.

The low option should be centered around the single addition, what previously had been intended to be an early learning (Pre-K) center. Based on the high levels of support for full-day kindergarten and relatively low levels of support for Pre-K expansion, our recommendation for this option is to change this to be a kindergarten center. With about \$20 million in funding for this option on top of district funds, our recommendation would be to use any remaining funds to address the remaining three top priorities in the spaces opened up in each elementary school by moving kindergarten to this new center.

The medium option should be based on the two addition option discussed during Phase 2 and previously by the district. In this option, the first addition (at Churchill) would be an early learning center, and the second addition (at Hadley) would be a 5<sup>th</sup> grade center. With about \$30 million in funding for this option

on top of district funds, any remaining funds should be used to address the community's top priorities in the spaces opened up in each school.

The high option should combine the new elementary school with the early learning center addition (at Churchill). With about \$40 million in funding for this option on top of district funds, any remaining funds should be used to address the community's top priorities in the spaces opened up in each school.