

# FACT SHEET

Poplar Bluff Public Schools

April 8, 2014 Election



The following are facts concerning the upcoming April 8<sup>th</sup> election. Should answers be needed to additional questions, please forward your questions to Superintendent Chris Hon or Assistant Superintendent Rod Priest.

1. What is this election about?

- a. This election is about the future of our children and our community.
- b. Our schools are out of space and a recent demographic study by Business Information Systems indicates we could continue to grow from approximately 5,022 students to potentially 6,008 students by the year 2021.
- c. Our school district and community is at an important “crossroads” of what to do.
- d. The Long-Range Planning Committee has carefully studied numerous viable options and has developed what is “The BEST Plan” that is economical and will improve education for all students.

2. Why is this election needed at this time?

- a. Poplar Bluff is a vibrant, growing community.
- b. Our schools have limited space to put additional students or expand our programs.
- c. Our schools are at capacity; some already are having classes in trailers.
- d. Many school sites are already too small to allow for building additions.
- e. Our students are currently utilizing spaces that were never intended for instruction.
- f. We are beginning to waste our money on short-term fixes and can’t expand our programs.

3. How did you arrive at this Plan?

- a. The Board of Education and administration assembled an experienced planning team to look at **ALL Viable Options** and develop “The BEST Plan.”
- b. This plan was to address our expected growth and our aging facilities with the understanding that we must be as conservative and utilize our existing infrastructure first.
- c. In hiring the top professionals, we went through a lengthy interview process and selected the team of:
  - i. **Wm. B. Ittner, Inc.** Architects out of St. Louis are specialists in school planning, having completed over 4,000 schools since 1899.
  - ii. **Dille-Traxel LLC** Architects from Poplar Bluff who know our schools and community, having designed and constructed our new Kindergarten Center and are working with TRC to expand the college campus.

For additional questions please contact  
Chris Hon, Superintendent 573-785-7751

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- iii. **Jerry McCall**, President of Educational Consulting Services, an educational consultant who has recently worked with the Jackson School District and Cape Girardeau School District.
  - d. To work with this professional team we assembled a **“Long-Range Planning Committee”** consisting of business leaders who have longstanding roots in Poplar Bluff.
  - e. In stressing the importance of transparency and ensuring we maintain the local values of Poplar Bluff, we assembled an independent **“Citizens’ Advisory Committee”** selected from a wide cross-section of patrons. They were an integral part of the planning process, ensuring that all candid comments were considered.
  - f. Our **school staff** provided input as to our needs and priorities throughout each grade level.
4. **What is the “Plan”?**
- a. The goal of the plan is to provide better education for all students, allowing for continued student growth, and utilizing our buildings in the most fiscally responsible manner.
  - b. There are two main decisions that led us to **“The BEST Plan.”**
    - i. First, to determine the best solution to meet our High School needs for grades 9– 12.
    - ii. We are relocating the fourth grade to free up space for growth at our elementary schools. This avoids the high costs of having to add onto each elementary or having to construct a costly new elementary in another location, and redistrict. Our elementary sites are at capacity and too small to add onto.
  - c. This Plan includes:
    - i. To locate grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> to the current 80-acre 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade site. We are adding on 132,400 SF to the existing 99,413 SF building to complete the school.
    - ii. To create a 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade campus at the existing High School site that includes renovating the school, providing a new front addition, and improving car/bus circulation.
    - iii. To provide improvements at each of the elementary schools.
5. **Is this the most economical option?**
- a. Yes! This plan utilizes all of our existing facilities except **“C”** building at the current High School.

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6. Why not renovate our **current High School and keep it for grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>**?
  - a. During community engagement, the need to have all or most facilities used by high school students located on one campus became essential. The current site is not large enough to incorporate the vocational programs or support all the fields, parking, and building expansion needed.
  - b. Bacon Memorial Park located to the east is legally titled to remain a Park. It is not available for the school district to purchase. It also has flooding problems that the district would need to resolve at our expense.
  
7. Why not construct a **new High School**?
  - a. We simply cannot afford the price of a new high school campus with grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>.
  - b. We would have to find and purchase more land.
  - c. We would also end up with a surplus of space that is expensive to maintain.
  
8. Why **locate the High School** to the current 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> site?
  - a. The site is currently owned and paid for by the taxpayers and consists of 80-acres, ideal for a new high school.
  - b. The entire 99,413 SF building can be reused to serve as a High School including the kitchen, standardized classrooms, practice gym, and cafeteria.
  - c. To complete the High School, we will add 132,400 SF of the specialized spaces required of our high school curriculum including science rooms, library, music, varsity gym, wrestling, weight room, ROTC, and other spaces.
  - d. There is sufficient room to add all Athletic Fields including football/track stadium, soccer, marching band, ROTC, softball, and baseball.
  - e. The Technical Career Center is already located at that site, allowing students to conveniently take classes in both buildings.
  - f. The site entrance is conveniently located just off two recently improved public roads, Interstate 67 and Oak Grove Road. This improves traffic safety and congestion without having to incur any additional costs.
  - g. This site will be very visible from Interstate 67 and easy for all to access.
  
9. Why include the **new football stadium**?
  - a. This consolidates all student activities on one campus, eliminating travel time and increasing time for educational instruction, and then improving safety of our students.

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- b. The all-weather surface of the track and field will allow for a high frequency of use with minimum maintenance cost.

10. **What will happen to Fred M. Morrow Stadium?**

- a. The Junior High will fully utilize the stadium and track during daily P.E. and for games, events, and meets.
- b. The community never has enough recreational areas for our children. The current field can be used to expand and support our Park Department summer activities and elementary football programs.
- c. The community could utilize the facilities for summer concerts, programs, and events.

11. **What will happen to the Theater?**

- a. It is still available for use by the district.
- b. The new High School campus has planned for a future larger auditorium depending upon receiving monies from a FEMA grant.

12. **Why move 4<sup>th</sup> grade out of the existing elementary schools?**

- a. The current elementary sites are too small to allow for building expansion without losing playground space or areas for parking.
- b. The most economical way to provide for enrollment growth is to relocate 4<sup>th</sup> graders, to free up space for growth. As an example, when 4<sup>th</sup> graders move out of O'Neal Elementary, the school will gain space for the growth of 100 students.
- c. Many neighborhoods are strained with the growing elementary schools and the traffic problems that occur daily.
- d. The fourth grade curriculum aligns better with the intermediate grades than with the primary grades.

13. **Why put grades 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> together at the current High School site?**

- a. While unique to Poplar Bluff, it happens to be a common grade configuration.
- b. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade will be in a separate wing and function just like they do now in "self-contained" classrooms.
- c. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders will function just like they do now, changing classes to take their full list of courses.
- d. All will share the cafeteria, library and gymnasium at their scheduled times.

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14. What improvements need to be made at the **existing High School so it meets all the needs of a 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center?**

- a. The building will be renovated and expanded to provide for growth in enrollments and educational programs.
- b. The classrooms are practically the same size that they have now. Improvements will be made to classroom storage and casework so there is nearly an identical match.
- c. All separate buildings will be connected with enclosed corridors providing for improved safety and security. Currently it is considered an “Open Campus” with students having to walk outside to go to classes.
- d. A new front addition will be constructed that provides for a “secured” front entry for the students and visitors, **STEM (science, technology, engineering & math) rooms**, library/media center, and centralized administration.
- e. The existing science building will be demolished because of its high cost to renovate and a **“secured- playground/outdoor classroom” combination** will be added in its place. This provides a playground that is not accessible from the outside, allowing for improved safety and security.

15. How will **traffic** be handled at the new 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center?

- a. The City of Poplar Bluff has plans for adding a new entrance off the lighted intersection at N. Westwood Blvd. (HWY 60) and Kanell Blvd. This will provide a safe and direct way both to and from the school.
- b. All car traffic will be in front of the school, with a separate bus loop located in the rear of the building and dropping students off at the entrance to the cafeteria.
- c. Currently we have four grades at the High School with many student drivers. Reducing this to three grades, even with growth, should not increase traffic at that location.

16. What improvements will be made at the **Junior High?**

- a. A FEMA Safe Room will be added as a result of a recent grant. This area will serve as a needed Multipurpose Room with additional restrooms and instructional spaces.
- b. Restrooms will be renovated since they are original to the building.
- c. The cafeteria will be expanded.
- d. The industrial technology classroom (shop), art, and two other classrooms will be able to be located in the main building.

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## 17. What improvements will be made at Oak Grove Elementary?

- a. Road improvements will be made by the City.
- b. A new bus and car drop-off area will be created to improve safety including a student canopy.
- c. A new secured entrance will be created to the north away from the busy Oak Grove Road. The Principal's office will be added in this location and the existing office will be converted to a classroom.

## 18. What improvements will be made at O'Neal Elementary?

- a. Having 4<sup>th</sup> grade move to the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center will provide additional room to grow and reduce the congestion at the parent pick-up area.
- b. A new Commons Area will be added that ties all the buildings together, providing improved student security.
- c. The east annex will be renovated by creating four large classrooms and indoor hallway that allow students to have access to the rest of the school without having to go outside.
  - i. New Music Room and storage
  - ii. New Art Room and storage
  - iii. New Computer Room
  - iv. New Classroom

## 19. What improvements will be made at Eugene Field Elementary?

- a. The two buildings will be connected by a hallway.
- b. Currently students must cross a public street to go to the playground. Student safety will be improved by switching the playground with the parking.
- c. The City will not allow Cross Street to be eliminated, which separates the building from the student playground.

## 20. What improvements will be made at Lake Road Elementary?

- a. Having the 4<sup>th</sup> grade move to the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center will allow us to eliminate the trailers.
- b. A new entry will be added which will improve student safety and security.

## 21. What improvements will be made at the Kindergarten Center?

- a. It is our newest building. No work is included at this time.

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- b. The kindergarten was designed for expansion and in the future would be the perfect location for our early childhood programs.

22. What improvements will be made at the **Technical Career Center?**

- a. Having the High School on the same site will allow students to walk between the buildings.
- b. Bussing will be eliminated.
- c. No work is included at this time.

23. What improvements will be made at the **Early Childhood Center?**

- a. No work is included at this time.
- b. In the future the ECC will be relocated to the Kindergarten Center where the following spaces can be shared and avoid additional construction: gym, cafeteria, kitchen, and library.

24. What improvements will be made at the **Graduation Center (alternative school)?**

- a. No work is included at this time.
- b. In the future the alternative school programs can utilize the newer construction at Mark Twain.

25. What improvements will be made at the **Central Administration Building?**

- a. No work is included at this time.

26. How does the **Levy** for Poplar Bluff Schools **compare** to surrounding school district?

- a. Our current **Levy of \$2.93** is the lowest of all surrounding school districts.
- b. Schools that are comparable to us have higher levies such as: Cape at \$4.82, Farmington at \$3.98, Sikeston at \$3.84, and Jackson at \$3.79.

27. What will our **new Levy** become?

- a. The increase of **80 cents**.
- b. Our new levy would be \$3.73, slightly below Jackson.

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## 28. What will this Levy increase cost me?

- a. If the tax assessor values your house at \$100,000 for tax purposes, you will pay an additional 42 cents per day, or \$12.67 per month. The total additional cost per year will be \$152.
- b. Since every property is unique, the easiest method is to look at your tax assessment to determine assessed value and divide by 100, then multiply by .80.

## 29. When will the construction be completed?

- a. The largest projects include the construction of the High School at the current 80-acre site where 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade is located, and construction/renovation of a new 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center where the High School is presently located. The following are the key dates:
  - i. The design work and bidding will be completed at the end of 2014.
  - ii. Construction will occur throughout 2015 and continue through the summer of 2016.
  - iii. The summer of 2016 will be when the two schools are completed.
  - iv. Both schools will have their first day of class beginning at the end of August 2016.

## 30. What happens if the election does not pass?

- a. Nothing lasts forever. The district has used the current high school longer than any previous high school building in the history of the district.
- b. The cost of maintaining aging facilities will put a financial strain on the district, limiting the resources for instruction.
- c. The district will face difficult challenges utilizing existing space with growing enrollments.

## 31. Summarize for me the reasons why we need this!

- a. This is about ***“Our Kids, Our Community, & Our Future.”***
- b. Our kids are falling behind in terms of what other districts around us are providing.
- c. We expect that “test scores” and “graduation rates” will improve for ALL students.
- d. This is “The BEST Plan.” It has been well researched over the past three years with valuable community engagement.
- e. Currently the cost of borrowing funds is the lowest it has been for decades and it will only increase.

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- f. Economic development is important to Poplar Bluff and the values of homes. When families and companies are looking at where to locate, they find that our school facilities do not compete with other schools like Jackson, Cape Girardeau and others.
- g. The state does not fund brick and mortar; that is the sole responsibility of the local community.
- h. These local tax dollars stay at home to improve our community and economy. We are not sending these tax dollars to the state or federal government in hopes that they get back to us in support and services. Your dollars support our children, our community, and our future.