

Chalkboard

By

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Gentry Public Schools

Yet another again, I am asking a favor of you. Yes, it involves money. But the favor is a little different this time. In the past, about six or seven times in the almost sixteen years I have served as your superintendent, the school district has asked you to raise your school district millage. There have been a few close votes but you always said “yes”. I may be practicing self-delusion, but I believe you have passed those increased mills because you have been informed of the need, analyzed the legitimacy of the need yourself, and voted in the affirmative because the majority of you agreed the need existed. True or not, that is the way I think and do business.

The favor today is not to ask you to pass another millage increase at the next September 2008 school election. The favor is to ask you to participate in a survey the district is offering as part of a strategy in planning for the future of the school district.

This type survey is a first for me and, to my knowledge, a first for the district. Taking advantage of technology, the survey is offered on our website and, if you choose to participate, you will take it on-line on you own personal computer at home. I suppose, depending on the policies of where you work, you could complete it at your work site. It is relatively short and can be completed in about 10 minutes or less; it could be easily completed perhaps on your lunch break.

As provided in a letter sent home recently with students, if you do not have Internet access at home you may use a computer at the library at any of the four school campuses any time during school hours. We only ask that you first check in at the respective principal’s office and obtain a *Visitor* pass.

Also, the newly renovated Gentry Public Library also has computers that the public may use to access the Internet. Ms. Darla Threet, the city librarian, extends a personal invitation for you to take the survey at the city library if you so desire.

This survey is completely anonymous. Neither you, as an individual, nor your computer’s IP address will be identified when you take the survey. Those parameters were chosen because the district is seeking your frank opinion. The survey is anonymous also because some of the questions might seem personal or irrelevant to a future building plan. The personal information is asked so that we can determine the status of you, the respondent. Knowing things about you, even

though we will not know who you are, may help us to better understand your answers.

If you have been reading the last series of *Chalkboards* you realize that the school district has formed an in-house committee named the **Gentry Public School District Facilities Ten Year Master Plan Committee**. (I thought it highly appropriate that a 10 year plan committee should have a 10 word name; educationalese at its best.)

Just as the name would imply, the purpose of the committee is to formulate a plan for our school facilities for the next 10 years. The committee's work would then be presented to the school board for its approval or modification.

An earlier *Chalkboard* posed some related questions, ““What if in the future instead of building a new Intermediate School, the district were to build a new high school? What if we did that and moved the middle school to the existing high school and the Intermediate school to the existing middle school? Would that be more feasible than trying to renovate all the buildings on the Intermediate school campus? Would it be more feasible than adding classrooms onto the new Primary and again joining the Intermediate and Primary schools together in a shared space?” The committee members had opinions but no real answers to the questions.

It became readily apparent to the committee that the people whose opinions really needed to be gathered were the people who would be asked to pick up the tab. Thus, the survey was born. Thus, I ask the favor on behalf of the committee. Please log on to our web site at <http://www.gentrypioneers.com/> and select the link under the “Announcements” section. You will be automatically directed to the survey form.

It's short. It's anonymous. It will help give us direction as we plan for the educational needs of your children and grandchildren.